

THE TOWER

FEBRUARY 2025

DECORAH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

EMAIL: DECORAH-FIRST-UMC@IAUMC.NET WEBSITE: DECORAHFIRSTUNITEDMETHODIST@ORG

563-382-3835

A Message from Rev. Cat



Welcome to February. A month full of love and often seems to go by so quickly. I will be on vacation from February 4, 2025, to February 17, 2025. If you should find yourself in need of pastoral care, my colleague Melissa Warren, serving in Cresco, has said she would be willing to provide that for you in my absence. If you should need to contact her, the number is 515-290-0893. I would like to leave you with this beautifully written poem by Mya Angelou as we head into the second month of a new year.

Rev. Cat Stokes

I am a Christian: by Maya Angelou

When I say "I am a Christian"
I'm not shouting "I am saved."
I'm whispering "I get lost"
That is why I chose this way.

When I say "I am a Christian"
I don't speak of this with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble
And need someone to be my guide.

When I say "I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong.
I'm professing that I am weak
And pray for strength to carry on.

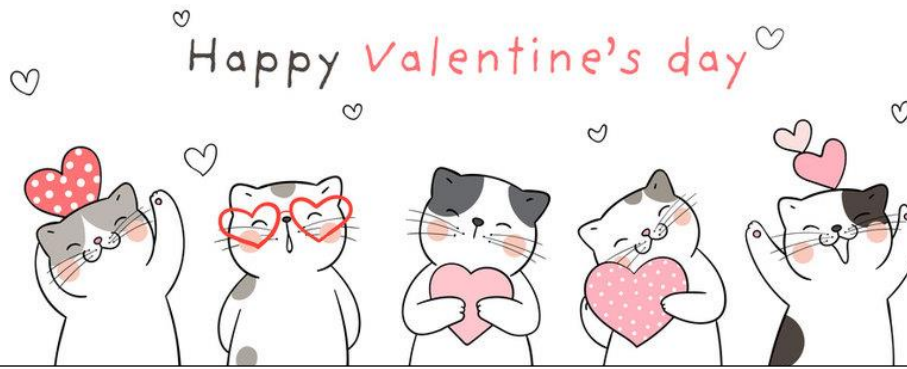
When I say "I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success.
I'm admitting I have failed
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say "I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect.
My flaws are too visible
But God believes I'm worth it.

When I say "I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain.
I have my share of heartaches
Which is why I seek HIS name.

When I say "I am a Christian"
I do not wish to judge.
I have no authority
I only know I'm loved.





Christian Experience Weekend!!

St Patrick Parish will again be sponsoring the Christian Experience Weekend (CEW). CEW is an enjoyable renewal weekend for adults, designed to enable them to more deeply "experience" themselves and their relationship to God. If you are seeking purpose or some direction in your life, or just a chance to share your faith with others, CEW will give you many ideas to consider.

The weekend is intended for any person who is over eighteen years of age. All faiths are welcome to attend. Attendance is limited and advanced registration is required.

The men's weekend will take place at Village Creek Bible Camp in Lansing and is planned for February 21st - 23rd, 2025. The women's weekend will take place the following weekend, February 28 - March 2, 2025, and is also held at Village Creek Bible Camp. The cost of the weekend is \$110.00. There are limited scholarships available for anyone who cannot afford the entire cost of the weekend. Please encourage all to go.

February Worship Leaders

Liturgist

February 2 Mark Landas
 February 9 Sherry Shilling
 February 16 Diane Rarick
 February 23 Steve Luse

Coffee Servers

Sherry & Brian Shilling
 Don & Sally Stromseth
 Deborah Bishop
 Spence & Kath McKinney

Community Resources

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!

February Birthdays

**1st – Dave Arp
**2nd – Dick Stephenson
**6th – Tracy Northup
**12th – Greg Huang-Dale
**21st – Sondra Carver
**24th – Douglas Johnson
**28th – Jon Young

**1st – Joshua Hardy
**5th – Beth Nesteby-Weis
**10th – Sonja Molitor
**17th – Martha Alm
**21st – Marcia Hardy
**28th – Brady Dawley



Please let the office know of any errors or additions

February Notes from Trustees:

The Ad Council has approved the proposal to award Trustees grants in the amount of \$15,665 from the Benevolence Fund to 12 local organizations. In December the Church received \$200,000 as trust funds from the estate of Robert McQueen.

Help Wanted

Pastors Mike Wilker and Matthew Rossler are looking to put a team together, made up of pastors, priests, and lay persons, to help address the widening housing difficulties that many in Decorah and the surrounding community are facing.

They are looking for 5-7 leaders (mostly lay leaders) from several congregations to be on this core organizing team. The team will work with the pastors and/or the leaders/committees the pastors designated. The team will speak with congregation members about their experiences with housing and housing transitions. We have noticed an uptick in the need for renters to get help and we would like to better understand, and improve if/where needed, our community coordination and response to people who are housing insecure.

If you are interested, please let Rev. Cat know so she can pass on your information to the correct people. Please consider joining in this important work.

“Souper Bowl” Sunday

On February 9th bring some soup or canned goods for your favorite team and put it in the box of the team you are cheering for to win. The best thing is that our food insecure neighbors win, too! Let’s fill up the boxes!



United Women of Faith Corner

Quilting group will meet each Tuesday morning 9:00-noon.
Mat weaving Wednesday, February 5th & 20th from 10:00-noon.

UW Faith meeting Wednesday, February 5th at 1:00pm. We will be making Valentines and drinking coffee!!
Hostesses are Connie Bergstrom and Lyn White.

2025 UW Faith Officers:

Syd Stephenson – President

Virginia Leidahl – Vice President

Connie Bergstrom -- Treasurer

Jane Vande Berg – Secretary

Contact Syd for questions or concerns: 563-379-2054 or auntsyd@hotmail.com

Flowers for February

Flowers for the altar this month are provided by Emily Young, Candace Arp, and Sweet Young.

If you would like to bring an arrangement to share in honor or memory of someone, please contact Sweet.



Book Club Information

The FUMC Book Club will meet on Thursday, February 20 at 1:30pm to discuss *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn. We will be meeting at Cynthia Peterson's home located at 703 Decorah Ave in Decorah. This book is on hold for FUMC at the Decorah Public Library at their main desk. If you would like to attend, please contact Jane Hardy at 563-382-5316 or email jhardy3333@aol.com.

Our New Directories are Here!!!

Our Directories have been printed and are available for you to pick up at the church. The cost of printing was \$20 per book, and we don't have a reserve in our budget for that. We are asking if you can donate to pay for your book, if possible. Checks can be made payable to Decorah First United Methodist Church. We understand that this may be a hardship for some of our members, so it is not a requirement for those who wish to have a book. We are asking that if you are interested, and able, to donate extra money to cover the cost for those who have difficulty paying. We have also ordered extra books to have available for new members in the future and miscellaneous use. Any extra donations will help cover these costs. A big thanks to all of you for making your pictures available for this great addition for our congregation! Nancy Ruen expresses her appreciation to all who have graciously thanked her for her work in getting this volunteer project completed. If you did not get your picture included and still wish it could be, please send a picture to nancyruen@gmail.com and we will come up with a way to get additional pages for those who request one. Nancy apologizes for any errors or accidental mistakes that may have been printed or left out. She used information that was given to her or from church records if it wasn't directly provided.

Again, a HUGE thank you to Nancy for putting these together!



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Here is our list of books we will be reading this year:

March: *Happiness Falls* by Angie Kim

April: *Distant Sons* by Tim Johnston

May: *The First Ladies* by Marie Benedict & Victoria Christopher Murray

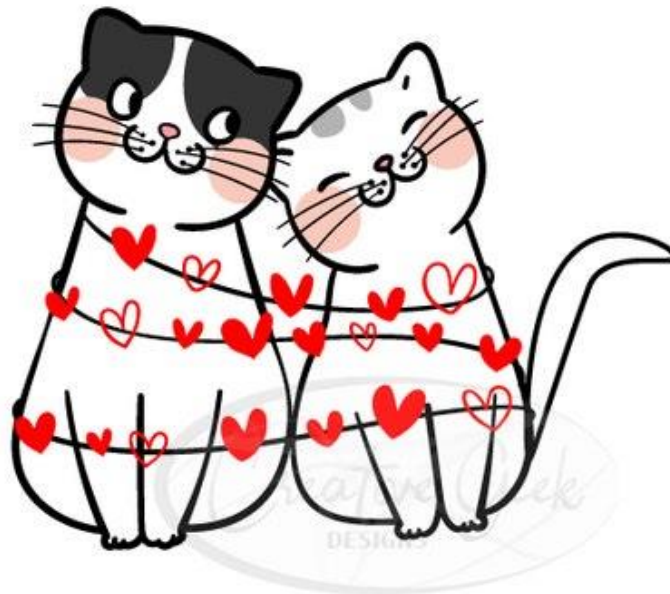
June: *Help Wanted* by Adelle Waldmen

July: *A Great Country* by Shilpi Gourda

August: *Real Americans* by Rachel Khong

September: *Poverty, by America* by Mathew Desmond

October: *A Council of Dolls* by Mona Susan Power



Announcements & Prayer Concerns

- ❖ Iowa Conference **United Women in Faith Book Discussion via Zoom Saturday, February 1st from 10:00-11:30AM.** Book of discussion will be *Separated by the Border* by Gena Thomas. Session will include brief overview of the book. Discussion sessions will be led by Iowa Conference United Women in Faith Migrant Concerns Task Force. Reading book before meeting is encouraged but not required. All are welcome to participate! Please register prior to the meeting using this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAlcuiqrjMsEt1WOml6mTnBh6xJ9MXqVGCZ> . Note: A “JOIN MEETING” email will be sent to you through Zoom after you register. For questions, contact Bobby Jo Paige at bjpdaisy@gmail.com .
- ❖ **DECORAH COMMUNITY MEAL: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH, 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, several retailers from Decorah 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.
- ❖ It is time to start collecting donations for our Valentine’s care packages this year! We have at least 14 this year! **We will be packaging them up on Sunday Feb 9th, 2025.** Please bring by the church any of the following items to share with the college students. There will be a box near the office labeled for this purpose.
 - ❖ Chocolate
 - ❖ Valentine’s candy
 - ❖ Granola bars
 - ❖ Microwave popcorn
 - ❖ Tea or hot cocoa packets
 - ❖ Cards
 - ❖ Other small items if you have any great ideas!
- ❖ We will divide them up, package them up and send them off! We always get some very appreciative thank you’s from the young adults!! Thanks so much!
 - ❖ From: Emily and the youth of FUMC
- ❖ **Gundersen Health System will be hosting a Healthy Living with Chronic Pain VIRTUAL workshop Wednesday mornings for 6 weeks starting Feb. 12.** This workshop is designed to help adults with strategies for understanding and managing pain and more. For information, please call Vicky at 608-775-6870 or go to Gundersenhealth.org/events.
- ❖ **Aase Haugen’s Sprinkle the Love Valentine fundraiser** is taking preorders for a 2-person red velvet cake with frosting! Call or text 563-379-6921 or email andrea.hexom@aasehaugen.com. \$5 suggested donation, all proceeds go to Aase’s Angels Alzheimer Team. **Pick up Thursday, February 13th from 3-7pm** or by appointment at Aase Haugen front entrance.
- ❖ **FRANKVILLE COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH VALENTINE SOUP LUNCHEON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.** Serving four homemade soups (vegetable beef, chicken noodle, cheesy broccoli, and potato ham), along with rolls, bars, and beverages. Free-will donation. Your support is always sincerely appreciated. We hope you can join us for good food and warm conversation! ❤️
- ❖ **Buntrock Scholarship Applications:** Attention college bound members, it’s time to get applications for the Buntrock Scholarship completed. They need to be turned into the church office by **March 4th**.
 - ❖ For application form, please reach out to church office. Printed copies can also be found in office.
- ❖ **Decorah Community Food Pantry:** Watch for upcoming notice of the **Annual Meeting** of the pantry, plans for March meeting are underway and Date, Time, and Place will be announced in February. The Annual Meeting is open to all.

Seasonal Health Tips!

Sniffles, cough, upset stomach? What is going on? Is it serious? Should I see my Doctor?

This time of year, it's hard to know how serious my symptoms are. Mayo Clinic has offered this symptom check:

Symptoms	COVID-19	Cold	Flu	Seasonal Allergies
Headache	Usually	Rarely	Usually	Rarely
Cough	Sometimes (dry)	Sometimes	Usually	Sometimes
Muscle aches	Sometimes	Never	Usually	Never
Tiredness	Usually	Never	Usually	Sometimes
Sneezing	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Usually
Sore throat	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually
Runny or stuffy nose	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually
Fever	Sometimes	Rarely	Usually	Never
Diarrhea	Sometimes	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Nausea or vomiting	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Never
Shortness of breath or trouble breathing	Sometimes	Never	Sometimes	Sometimes
New loss of taste or smell	Sometimes – early often without a runny or stuffy nose	Never		Sometimes
Itchy nose, eyes, mouth or inner ear	Sometimes			Usually
Pink eye, conjunctivitis	Sometimes			Sometimes

COVID-19, influenza, and the common cold are respiratory diseases caused by different viruses.

They spread in similar ways. Testing can be done to determine which if any of the viruses you have.

Currently, the most common symptoms of COVID-19 are runny or stuffy nose, headache, and sore throat. You can lower your risk of infection with viruses by following these safety measures:

Get vaccinated- it's not too late to get the latest COVID 19 vaccine or flu vaccine.

Wash your hands often and follow good hand hygiene

Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces like door handles, light switches, countertops.

Stay home if you are not feeling well. This protects those around you and protects your symptoms from worsening.

Sister Parish Corner

The Sister Parish group would like to provide an update!!

- FUMC Sister Parish group united with UCC and other community members in 2023.
- We are planning a north to south delegation around May 28-June 8, 2025.
- We have been fundraising already and plan to do more!
- The cost of the trip is about \$1500 plus airfare/per person, so at least \$2200/person.
- Current balance is about \$9,000 and our total need is \$22,000.
- Fundraisers for far have been led by Kathi Mitchell- she has catered the following events and SP members have volunteered to help with the efforts:
 - Nordic Fest
 - Casi Misseldine wedding
 - Burning Bright meal between concerts
 - SP Board visit
- We will be in touch about upcoming fundraising opportunities.
- Donations will be accepted anytime- contact Emily Young Johnson with questions 563-202-0174.
- Delegates are: Holly; Patience; Jan, (Margret 17); Maria, (Mateo 4); Emily, (Elsa 17); Rachel.
- **Next Meeting: Monday, Jan 13 at 6:15 at the UCC**



Enough Stewardship Campaign Introduction

Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity

One of Jesus' great teaching parables involves a sower who cast seed along the ground. The sower hoped the seeds would sprout, grow, and bear good fruit. Some seeds did just that, producing a great harvest. But others, Jesus said, fell among thorns and, though they began to grow, these good plants were quickly choked out. Jesus said the thorns were "the cares of the world and the lure of wealth" (Matthew 13:22).

In a culture where having "enough" seems to have become a never-ending pursuit, Jesus' parable remains incredibly relevant. Many of us are chasing the American dream in ways that lead to stress, anxiety, and fear—thorns that can rob us of the ability to enjoy the abundant lives of purpose that God intended for us.

All of us have struggled with these issues at one time or another. They are important issues that we cannot ignore. This is why, on February 23 and March 2, we will be having a worship emphasis called Enough: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity. During this time, we will explore what the Bible teaches us about financial management through corporate worship. Both weeks will hopefully provide you with some practical tools you can use to assess your financial situation and develop a financial plan with a biblical foundation.

On March 9, 2025, we will have the opportunity to make personal commitments of our offerings to God through our church in the coming year. We will consecrate these commitments during the worship service.

I hope you will join us as we briefly look at how we can manage our financial resources and truly experience simplicity, generosity, and joy.

Rev. Cat Stokes and your Finance Team