

# BEHOLD!! SMYRNA

December 2023



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

*Dear Smyrna Friends,*

When we were children (and, I confess, when we were older than children too), my brother Mark used to make me laugh on Christmas Eve during the sacred singing of *Silent Night*. He would do this by switching octaves, first singing incredibly low and then in the middle of a **verse, busting into a high falsetto. So for a long time, even when Mark wasn't singing in my ear, this song made me giggle.** Fast forward a decade or two, and I was with my own child in a Christmas Eve worship service in 2008. Due to snow, our own church service had been canceled so my child and I trudged through the snow, across the street to a neighborhood church. Surrounded by strangers, Ely and I felt at home only at last when we snuggled together, lit our candles and sang *Silent Night* together with those gathered. Fast forward again to 2021. It was the first Christmas after the death of a close family member, and this time *Silent Night* brought tears to my eyes, as I remembered how much this song had been loved by the one we had lost.



How do we make memories? There are lots of ads and messages, especially at this time of year, that suggest that memories can **be manufactured, packaged and delivered like presents.** I'm not sure it works that way. I guess you can make a **MEMORY**, but making **MEMORIES** takes time. No one could have created the many layers of meaning that *Silent Night* holds for me. Laughter, love, loss - **it's all wrapped up together.** Memories are created over time and years, layered one on top of another to make a whole.

**That's why, at this time of year, we tell familiar stories and sing familiar songs. We are making memories. The lasting ones.** Not the flimsy once-in-a-lifetime, never-to-be-repeated kind of memories promised by Disneyland, but the memories that layer and grow and deepen and get stronger, year by year. The kind of memories we are making grow and change, and as they do, get stronger. New experiences and stories are added year by year to an old, familiar story, until no one can count the layers it holds. I look forward to making memories with you this year!

Blessings,  
Pastor Jennifer

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## Mission and Outreach

As the Christmas holidays grow nearer, we continue to complete sewing the Christmas stockings. We will soon have them ready to give out to the students in the Safe Home Program and several other people in our community.

As always, we encourage you to remember the Molalla Food Bank. Paulette was able to deliver 69 pounds of food on Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for those donations.

Coming up for December, our emphasis will be the Christmas Fund which has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years. It provides emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities **and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks** each December to our lower-income retirees.

**We are continuing the tradition of decorating Smyrna's Christmas tree with donated mittens, hats, sox, and scarves.** After Christmas the donated items will go to the Canby center.



## Walking to Bethlehem

Smyrna is starting its Advent walk to Bethlehem. Here are the rules of the road: Keep track of (or estimate) your miles for each week.

- Activity: Earn one mile for every 15 minutes of physical activity. This can include walking, running, swimming, mountain climbing, or more mundane activities like house cleaning or washing the dishes. Remember, one mile for every 15 minutes.
- Eating fruit and vegetables: Earn one mile for each day of eating 5 servings of fruit and vegetables.
- Vaccinations: Earn 50 miles for each vaccination for COVID, flu, or RSV. You can count all vaccinations received over the summer or fall.

Please stop by the table with the mile-counters as you enter the church, and make your report each Sunday throughout Advent. We will keep you up to date on our weekly progress. We have only 6,920 miles to go. We can get there!

## Meetings in December

The Health Committee will not meet in December

December 3 — Pastoral Relations will meet after worship in the **Pastor's office**

December 6 — 7 pm Diaconate via Zoom

December 13 — 7 pm Church Council via Zoom



## Winter Days of Giving

December 10, 2023, has been designated as Winter Days of Giving. Financial Giving has been a way to help support our church in various church functions during the year. Rather than having another sale or cook off we began looking at just having designated days of Giving and skip the cost of buying items to try and sell and manage a profit.

With these Days of Giving funds we use the money for building repair. This past year we had parts of the building painted as well as shingled the steeple. So take a look at the new roof on the steeple as the pattern is very attractive. So think about how you can make a donation to this fund. Pre-addressed envelopes will be available on Sunday, December 10, 2023, for you to use.

We thank you for your support. Fund Raising Committee

## Advent Craft Tradition at Smyrna

On December 10, 2023, Smyrna members are invited to gather during Coffee Hour to make decorations for **Smyrna's Christmas Tree**—and one for the tree at home! Craft supplies and instructions will be provided by the Christian Education/Nurture Committee.



Our favorite pianist returns to Smyrna UCC for a concert at 2 pm on Saturday, December 9. John Nil-sen has delighted audiences in all 50 U.S. States and on four continents.

## Holidays and Sugar Consumption

This message is meant for the people who sit down and eat an entire pint (or quart) of ice cream or an entire box of Girl Scout cookies. (You know who you are.)



Americans in general eat too much sugar, leading to a variety of health problems (obesity, diabetes, etc.). Dietary guidelines recommend getting less than 10% of our total daily calories from added sugars, but many of us exceed that. Some studies have shown that animals derive more pleasure from ingesting sugar than cocaine. Are we doomed to become sugar addicts?

One idea, of course, is to limit the amount of sugary treats available in our houses and eat a diet consisting of mostly plant-based food, with small amounts of meat, and even smaller amounts of sugary and fatty foods. However, dietary restriction is associated with a greater risk of binge eating and excessive weight gain.

Another idea which some dietitians have is that giving ourselves permission to eat sugar may lessen our sugar cravings in the long run. They recommend keeping favorite desserts on hand at home and eating them when we want to, with the thought that over time the desire to overindulge will lessen.

**Another idea is to find your "pleasure plateau."** Don't cut out treats entirely, but pay close attention to how a treat is tasting as you eat it and notice when you stop enjoying the taste. Keep healthier snacks on hand as well, and choose carrot sticks rather than Thin Mints a majority of the time.

**Whatever methods you choose, choose a wide variety of food groups, enjoy the food you eat, and don't obsess over counting calories.** But try to share that quart of ice cream with someone.



Thanks!

- \* Nancy Bryant and Tom Daniels for editing and sending out the worship video faithfully each week.
- \* **Women's fellowship for the delicious Thanksgiving dinner.** We had the great problem of having to set an extra table!
- \* Pat Bryant for setting up the Thanksgiving banners.
- \* Florence, Anne, Dave, Sheila, Jeannie, Rebekah who helped with the Sunday School rooms spruce-up.
- \* All who brought food and attended the farewell blessing ceremony for Pastor Cat. Your presence was a gift!



LONELY? Medical issues? Need Help?

Please visit the Smyrna Resource page. **On Smyrna's website,** [www.smyrna-ucc.org](http://www.smyrna-ucc.org), just click the Resource tab ....

**RESOURCE Page**

A Helpful page for people in  
our community.  
(Click here.)



# ADVENT AT SMYRNA UCC

EACH SUNDAY IN WORSHIP, WE WILL HEAR THE CHRISTMAS STORY FROM A DIFFERENT GOSPEL. HOW IS THE STORY BOTH UNIQUE AND THE SAME IN EACH RETELLING? COME AND FIND OUT!

## **Sunday December 3**

11 am First Sunday in Advent - Hope  
Focus Scripture Mark 1:1-8

## **Sunday December 10**

11 am Second Sunday of Advent - Peace  
Focus Scripture Matthew 1:18-25

## **Sunday December 17**

11 am Third Sunday in Advent - Joy  
*All Ages Pageant*  
Focus Scripture Luke 1:26-38

## **Sunday December 24**

11:00 am Fourth Sunday in Advent - Love  
Festival of Lessons and Carols  
Focus Scripture John 1:1-14

4:00 pm Christmas Eve Service  
with Candle Lighting

## **Sunday December 31**

11 am New Years Eve Worship

## **Saturday, December 9, 2pm**

John Nielson Concert

## **Sunday November 26 through Sunday December 17, 9:45 am**

Study of *Light of the World: A Beginners Guide to Advent* by Amy-Jill Levine  
Join author, professor and Biblical Scholar Amy Jill Levine in exploring the biblical texts surrounding the birth of Jesus. Whether you are new to the Advent journey, or very familiar with these stories, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary and the Magi will come alive for you in a new way through Amy-Jill Levine's humor, intelligence and holy curiosity. Drop in as you can, or attend all four. Facilitated by Pastor Jennifer.

## **Pray along the way**

This time of year can get consumed with busy-ness. Take some time in the weeks ahead to intentionally hold space for the wonder and joy of the coming of the Christ Child. To guide you, we have received a gift of the UCC Advent Devotional called Glow. Be sure to pick one up. Also, my wife Rev. Tara and I will be writing a weekly invitation to prayer, available by email, so watch for that in your inbox. I will also print that one out for pick-up here at the church for those who prefer Blessings! Pastor Jennifer



# December 2023 at Smyrna

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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3 11 am Worship 9:45 am "Light of the World" study at Smyrna <i>First Sunday in Advent - Hope</i> Pastoral Relations mtg after worship	4 7 pm AA/AO	5	6 7 pm Diaconate mtg via Zoom	7 b.d. Barbara Daniels	8	9 2 pm John Nilsen Concert at Smyrna b.d. Nikolas Peterson																																																																																				
10 11 am Worship 9:45 am "Light of the World" study at Smyrna b.d. Jeff Marshall <i>Second Sunday in Advent -- Peace</i> Winter Days of Giving Advent Crafts after worship	11 7 pm AA/AO b.d. Chris Bangs	12 b.d. Jeannie Rogers	13 7 pm Church Council via Zoom	14 12 noon Women's Fellowship Luncheon b.d. Genevieve Freeman, Rebekah Yoder	15 b.d. Paulette Eyman, Tina Marshall, Steven Rigg	16																																																																																				
17 11 am Worship -- All Ages Pageant 9:45 am "Light of the World" study at Smyrna b.d. Josh Marshall, Garrett Veatch <i>Third Sunday in Advent -- Joy</i>	18 7 pm AA/AO	19	20	21 b.d. Kevin Yoder	22	23																																																																																				
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**No matter who you are,  
or where you are on life's  
journey, we welcome  
you.**

# SMYRNA



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

#### Prayer list

- Pat Bullard
- Beryl and Dan Fisher
- Genevieve Freeman
- The Holt family
- **Jeannie Rogers'** brothers Steven and John, and family
- Virginia Yoder
- Robin Alexander
- Ginger Redlinger



If you know anyone who should be on the prayer list in the Behold, please let Jeannie or Elaine know. If they would enjoy receiving cards notify someone in the Diaconate.

## Mission Statement

**Smyrna United Church of Christ is striving to be:**

- ♦ A place of peace, where we offer to all an extravagant welcome wherever you are in your life journey regardless of your ethnicity, marital status, religion, gender, race, age, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation, and where we teach the stories of God's love and call on our lives.
- ♦ A spiritual haven, where we accept and care for all people and God's creation in an outreach of grace.
- ♦ A lighthouse of God's compassion, where worship, teaching, learning and spiritual growth take place in community, powered by thought and action.
- ♦ A Christian people, working for God's realm in ecumenical harmony with other people of faith and conviction.