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Something to think about ...

For the Christmas Boxes this year, I was assigned a single parent with a two year old son. I was very happy when I saw the assignment because shopping for Christmas presents for a toddler is easy even if you don't know the child. Two year olds will be happy with just about anything you give them. (I remember when my own son John was 2, he spent the entire Christmas morning playing with a tiny car I had stuck in his stocking at the last moment while ignoring his more expensive gifts under the tree.) The gift portion of my Christmas Box then, took me only a few minutes of perusing the toy aisles at Walmart to pick out a few dinosaur-themed items which my instruction card noted was the current obsession of the two year old.

My annual fretfulness returned, however, when I arrived at Wegmans to buy the food items for the Christmas box. As I cruised up and down the aisles, I grappled with the same questions I face every year when fulfilling this task: "Do they eat canned peas or would they rather have canned corn? I wonder if they like yams. Crunchy or creamy peanut butter? Does the mother bake? What kind of cereal will the two year old like?" Some people might wave off such concerns with some version of "beggars can't be choosers," but that attitude has always felt patronizing and harsh to me. Just because a family doesn't have enough money to buy the fixings for a Christmas dinner doesn't mean they don't have food preferences like anyone else. Even my attempt to provide healthy foods in their box feels judgmental because who am I to tell another person that they will be better off eating oranges than oreos simply because I'm the one footing the bill? (Especially when I decided to treat myself to a doughnut before leaving the store!)

Perhaps you have struggled as I have with the mine field caused by charitable relief giving. Charitable giving of the Christmas box sort is central to our faith: Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing..." (Matthew 25:35-36) Jesus expected us to alleviate people's immediate needs by sharing what we have with them and so we collect food for the food pantry, gather coats for Cameron Ministries, serve at the Wellsville Community Kitchen, and put together boxes at Christmas for families struggling economically this year. Charitable giving, however, is also admittedly fraught with danger: we can turn our compassionate act into a glorification of the generosity of the giver instead of focusing on the needs of the recipient; we can point to our giving as sufficient to our Christian call to help to the poor and avoid addressing the deeper systemic causes of poverty; and we can subconsciously elevate ourselves over those we have helped becoming judgmental of their choices. One pastor I know became so concerned about the possible negative side effects of "hand-outs" that he

eliminated the Christmas Box program at his church altogether saying that the congregation should give their money and time instead to long-term solutions for ending poverty.

The answer, of course, to our dilemma is to work toward long-term solutions while also providing immediate relief recognizing that both are impartial responses without the other. A mother who doesn't have the money to put together a Christmas dinner for her children will be very grateful for our donation of a turkey and box of food; she will also be grateful, however, if we can work with organizations striving to raise the minimum wage so that next year, she can go to the store on her own and choose for herself between creamy and chunky peanut butter. Giving hand-outs without working toward systemic change leaves people trapped in poverty and always dependent on another's generosity. Working only for systemic change and dismissing immediate relief efforts — "hand-outs" — leaves people hungry and hopeless while they await the long process of social change. As Christians, we are called to do both, not just at Christmas but all the live long year.

I had fun buying items for the two year old I will never meet and filling a box full of food for his mother, but I will also work with programs like the ACC Fund for Women that will give people like the recipients of our Christmas boxes the opportunities they need to become economically independent of our charity. There is no one solution to alleviating the needs of others, which is why the best we can do is follow John Wesley's motto, who said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John", located to the right of the "Sharing Christmas" text.

Church News & Events



Mission of the Month



Winter Clothing Drive

December Mission of the Month Christmas Boxes

Our Mission of the Month for December is the Christmas Box project. We are sponsoring 17 families and boxes are at the Church Center waiting to be filled. Boxes should be filled and returned to the Church Center no later than December 6th. Tinned cookies should be dropped off no later than December 6.

If you were unable to sponsor a family you can help by making a financial donation to offset the cost of turkeys and additional items for the boxes. Donations labeled “Christmas Boxes” can be turned in at the Church Office .

Cookies for Food Pantry

The food pantry is requesting cookies for their Christmas boxes which will go out on December 13. Please get cookies to the church office on Wednesday or Thursday afternoons from 1pm to 4pm when Lana is in, or to Laurel’s house by noon on Saturday, December 12.

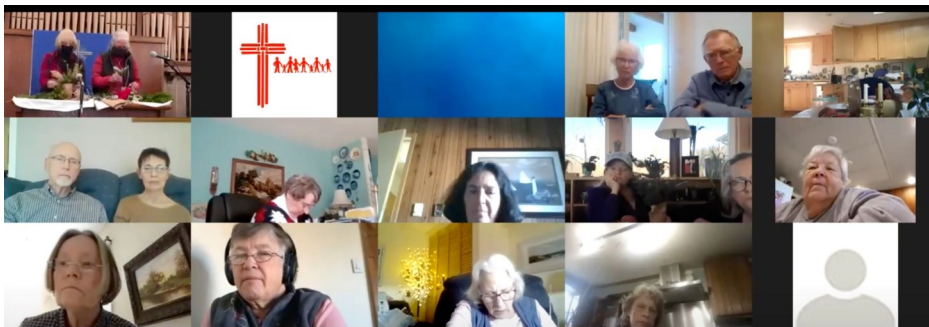


Donate to a Charity of Your Choice

Once again this year we are collecting winter clothing for Cameron Community Ministries in Rochester, NY. Cameron Community Ministries is an Urban Outreach Community Center in the Lyell-Otis Neighborhood of Rochester, NY. Gather coats, heavy fleeces, winter hats, mittens, scarves, new socks and underwear, any size. Totes for donating are on the Church Street entrance to the Church Center, outside the door of the Box of Books, and in Haircare. Jan & Dave Porter will be delivering soon after the **cut off date of December 11th**.

Hanging of the Greens

On Sunday, November 29 the Fellowship Board sponsored an after-worship craft event. Lana Meissner & Denise Grandusky demonstrated how to make burlap bag centerpieces. Zoomers picked up “grab and go” craft kits in advance. Below is Mindy Smith’s completed project.



Church News & Events, cont.

“Silent Bazaar”

There will be NO hustle and bustle in the King David Room on Friday, December 4, NO luncheon, NO baskets, NO candy, NO baked good, NO engagement with community members and friends. BUT we as a church community continue to send a message of “YES”: we remain filled with the hope, love, peace, and joy made manifest at Christmas. Together we continue to worship, make music, care for one another, and give generously to those in need.

Once before in our Bazaar history we did not host a Bazaar. It was December 2001:

According to a report presented at the May 19, 2002 UUC Annual Meeting by Mary Lou Cartledge on behalf of the Women’s Guild, the Guild “decided we needed a sabbatical, and would not hold a Bazaar in December. Because we enjoyed the fellowship and fun part of the Bazaar, we wanted to keep that part of the event alive. Terry Finlay and her committee arranged a festive evening for a Bazaar Memorial Dish-to-Pass Dinner on Thursday, December 6, 2001. Thirty four women enjoyed the dinner and a short program of reminiscing while viewing slides about past Bazaars. As Bazaar profits had been of help to the Guild as well as to the entire UUC church, it had been suggested that those wishing to do so could make a donation to the Guild representing what they might have spent on bazaar projects. A total of \$1,344.84 was donated.”

It was following this meeting that Jan Porter suggested having a Basket Bazaar. In December 2002 the first UUC Basket Bazaar took place.



The loss of income from this year’s Bazaar is significant so the Trustees are asking that you consider giving what you would have spent on the Bazaar as a special offering to the Church in addition to your regular pledge.

From Down Memory Lane...



Co-chairpersons Agnes Rhodes and Sharon Burdick admire some of the handcrafted dolls that will be for sale at the Union University Church Women’s Guild’s annual Christmas Bazaar tomorrow at the Church Center. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will feature many special departments. (SUN Photo)

Agnes Rhodes and Sharon Burdick show off hand made dolls to be sold at the 1981 UUC Bazaar.

Church News & Events, cont.



Join us after worship on December 13th for our annual Christmas Party. Although we are unable to have our usual dish-to-pass due to the pandemic, we can still have some fun and fellowship to celebrate the season and this year, people beyond the Alfred area will be able to join us.

Immediately following worship on the 13th, Laurie will lead us in three games that can be played both by those in the sanctuary and those on Zoom:

1. **Christmas Trivia** — Test your knowledge of Christmas
2. **Name That Carol** — Two people will compete to see who can name a carol in the fewest notes based on a vague unhelpful hint.
3. **Outburst** — Players try to name as many items as they can in a given category (for example, “Christmas movies.”)

Following the games, we will light candles during the playing/singing of Silent Night.

I hope you plan on staying after worship on December 13th. One day you will want to be able to say, “Remember when our Christmas Party was on Zoom? What a great time we had!”

Fusion Christmas Eve Service; 5:00 pm December 24th

This year due to the pandemic we will not be holding a community Christmas Eve service but instead each church will host a service for their own members. Our church Christmas Eve service will be at 5:00 on Christmas Eve and will be a Fusion service similar to worship using the same Zoom link that we use every Sunday. The service will include scripture readings, carols, and special music selections.

CHRISTMAS EVE RESERVATIONS



Due to social distancing requirements, we will only open the sanctuary to 20 people and ask everyone else to participate through Zoom. If you wish to attend in person, please email the church office at uucalfred@gmail.com, or Reverend DeMott at RevDeMott@gmail.com to put in your request.

Please Note: If there are more than 20 people requesting seating in the sanctuary:

People who have been regularly attending Fusion Church in person and/or who do not have internet access will be given priority.

People visiting from out of town will not be able to attend in person even if their family members are regular in-person attendees.

Worship leaders and musicians will not count in the 20 limit and don't need to reserve space

The service will also be recorded and posted to our Facebook and Youtube Channels immediately following the service so you will be able to watch at a later time if 5:00 is inconvenient for your family. If you have any questions, please email Reverend DeMott or the church office.

(RevDeMott@gmail.com;
uucalfred@gmail.com)



Church News & Events, cont.

Stu Smith's Remembrances of "Christmas Past" at UUC

by Stu Smith

As the Christmas season comes upon us and Melissa Jusianiec and her dedicated band of angels embark on what might be the 50th year of Christmas boxes I would like to share some of my experiences over the past fifty years or so with the Christmas Box project. I offer some personal recollections which are presented without documentation. These recollections have my late wife, Loretta Smith, as the primary actor in the UUC Christmas Box story and they took place between 1970 and 2010.

Our family arrived in Alfred in September of 1963. We attended UUC when Rick Bergren was minister. Agnes Rhodes was the first player in the story of our Christmas Box project and she became Loretta's mentor. Agnes' interest was in helping migrant workers in the Cohocton area but her efforts were eventually redirected to the Alfred area.

I recall that in the early days, turkeys were donated by individuals. On the morning the boxes were "to go out" there were some tense times when some turkeys did not show up on time. After a few frantic phone calls all the turkeys arrived.

In early December families/sponsors would meet to pack the boxes. The Stearns provided the boxes back then just as they do today. Between 20 and 22 boxes were packed, however Loretta was not always happy about the way they were packed. She wanted them repacked. So, we would go down to the Church Center, on the Sunday night before the boxes were to go out and repack 18-20 boxes. By that time my Christmas spirit was pretty low.

Loretta was not only the director of the Christmas Box "play" she was also the author. She contacted county officials in Belmont, the school nurse at Alfred Almond Central School, and others. She tabulated how many kids there were in each family and what they wanted for Christmas. She tried to match gifts with children. This was an accomplishment not widely known, but one which must have made many small children happy.

Most families were happy and appreciative of the boxers. I remember a young mother, who lived in the cabins, on the way to Crosby Creek Rd. She was

so glad to have a box. She embraced Loretta, and literally cried. That's an episode I'll never forget. We were so grateful for the help that Wally Higgins, Vern Burdick and Chuck Shultz gave us in loading cars.

Melissa Jusianiec has improved the mechanics of the Christmas Box project. As an observer and not so much as a player I see how things seem to go smoothly and efficiently.

I think everyone at UUC should be proud of the Christmas Box project. I say with a nod to Sir Winston Churchill that Christmas time has been "our finest hour."

The Winter Coat Project is another activity Loretta and I were involved in. Although spearheaded by the Union University Church, it is a community affair.

The first event I remember was a trip to Buffalo. Loretta and I had collected a car full of coats. We delivered them to an outreach mission called "Friends of the Night People," located a block or two from Delaware Ave. It was a cold but not snowy day in December. As we parked, one of the "residents," a young man without a jacket, came out to help us unload. As it happened, one of our better coats was the second coat to be unloaded. The young man put on the coat (which fitted him nicely) and said, warmly, "thank you." For Loretta and me, it was a Christmas moment.

After Laurie came to UUC (in October 1983) the coat drive moved to the Cameron Community Ministries located in the Lyell Ave. area in Rochester. It provides many services, including meals, to the mostly poor people in the area. When you give a coat or other winter clothing be aware that you are giving to the "least of these."

**Remember those
who are less
fortunate**



December Board Members of the Month

Deacon.....MaryAnn Whittemore (whitteduc@twc.com;252.676.0951)
 Elder.....Eliza Ordway (ordwayej@gmail.com; 1 (585) 610-5933)
 BOCE.....
 Fellowship.....Catherine Chambers (ChambeC@alfredstate.edu; 607.221.7869)
 Trustee.....Jerry Jusianiec (jusianjm@alfredstate.edu; 607-587-8274)
Who do you call? Flowers or lay leading—call an Elder; greeting or coffee hour—call a Deacon;
 Sunday school—call BOCE; building issues—call a Trustee.

January Board Members of the Month

Deacon.....Karrie Edwards (karrieloovesdogs@gmail.com; 607-382-6981)
 Elder.....Eliza Ordway (ordwayej@gmail.com; 1 (585) 610-5933)
 BOCE.....
 Fellowship.....Cathy Rees (Catherinesrees@gmail.com; 607.587.9598)
 Trustee.....Walt Schulze (schulze@alfred.edu; (607) 587-9529)
Who do you call? Flowers or lay leading—call an Elder; greeting or coffee hour—call a Deacon;
 Sunday school—call BOCE; building issues—call a Trustee.

Upcoming Sunday Leaders

If you are not able to serve as scheduled, please switch with someone listed on the charts below and notify the Church Office. If you are unable to find someone to switch with you, please contact either the Elder of the Month or the Deacon of the Month.

Date	Lay Leader	Flowers
Dec 6	Ordway	Communion
Dec. 13	Casey	Advent wreath
Dec. 20	Cartledge	Meissner
Dec. 27	Meissner	Meissner
Jan.3	TBD	TBD
Jan. 10	TBD	TBD
Jan. 17	TBD	TBD
Jan. 24	TBD	TBD
Jan. 31	TBD	TBD



Mission of the Month

Christmas Boxes

"I heard a bird sing / In the dark of December / A magical thing / And sweet to remember: 'We are nearer to spring / Than we were in September.'" — Oliver Herford

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

		1	2 12pm Book Group	3	4	5
6 10:30 Worship Communion	7	8	9 12pm Book Group	10	11	12
13 10:30 Worship Christmas Party	14	15	16 12pm Book Group	17	18	19
20 10:30 Worship	21	22	23 12pm Book Group	24 	25 	26
27 10:30 Worship	28	29	30 12pm Book Group	31		

Just for Fun



Chrismukkah

Continuing the current trend of large-scale mergers and acquisitions, it was announced today at a press conference that Christmas and Hanukkah will merge. An industry source said that the deal had been in the works for about 1300 years.

While details were not available at press time, it is believed that the overhead cost of having twelve days of Christmas and eight days of Hanukkah was becoming prohibitive for both sides. By combining forces, we're told, the world will be able to enjoy consistently high-quality service during the Fifteen Days of Chrismukkah, as the new holiday is being called.

Massive layoffs are expected, with lords a-leaping and maids a-milking being the hardest hit. As part of the conditions of the agreement, the letters on the dreidl, currently in Hebrew, will be replaced by Latin, thus becoming unintelligible to a wider audience.

Also, instead of translating to "A great miracle happened there," the message on the dreidl will be the more generic "Miraculous stuff happens." In exchange, it is believed that Jews will be allowed to use Santa Claus and his vast merchandising resources for buying and delivering their gifts.

One of the sticking points holding up the agreement for at least three hundred years was the question of whether Jewish children could leave milk and cookies for Santa even after having eaten meat for dinner. A breakthrough came last year, when Oreos were finally declared to be Kosher. All sides appeared happy about this.

A spokesman for Christmas, Inc., declined to say whether a takeover of Kwanzaa might not be in the works as well. He merely pointed out that, were it not for the independent existence of Kwanzaa, the merger between Christmas and Chanukah might indeed be seen as an unfair cornering of the holiday market. Fortunately for all concerned, he said, Kwanzaa will help to maintain the competitive balance. He then closed the press conference by leading all present in a rousing rendition of "Oy Vey, All Ye Faithful."

Christmas Queue Folly

Just before Christmas I was shopping at a toy fayre in Nottingham. I glanced to my left and caught sight of a queue at the doll counter; they were waiting for the shelves to be restocked with Mattel dolls. As I looked I realised that in the queue was a good friend of mine. Knowing Ernie well I was sure that he had no daughters nor did he have any nieces so I wondered why he should want to buy a doll at Christmas time. "Hey, Ernie," I cried, "I hadn't realised you collected dolls."

"I don't," he replied laughing.

"Really," I queried, "then you must be buying a Christmas present then?"

"No, not at all, my friend," responded Ernie, his eyes twinkling merrily.

"If you don't mind my asking then Ernie," I said, "Why exactly are you standing in this particular queue?"

"Oh that," he giggled. "It's like this, my mate," he mused, "I've never been able to resist a Barbie queue."





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