



# *Tidings of Hope*



SENDING LIGHT AND LOVE

## PRESENCE

(NOT PRESENTS)

*A Blessed  
and  
Merry Christmas  
From  
HOPE  
United Church of Christ*



## *December 2023*

*Tidings of Hope* published monthly by: **Hope United Church of Christ**

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*Submissions for publication may be sent to the Church Office at the above addresses, either electronically or by paper.*

Greetings from  
Rev. Karen Curtis-Weakley



‘Tis the Season...

Yes, the Christmas season has already begun. Is anyone else wondering how it got here so fast? It seemed like just a moment ago I was buying Halloween candy and now the aisles are full of candy canes! ‘Tis the season to be jolly, and busy! There is so much to do! The shopping and wrapping and baking and decorating and parties and concerts and whew—I’m exhausted already! December is here and I haven’t even finished my Thanksgiving leftovers. Advent begins December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Advent is the liturgical season when the church gets ready for Christmas. The word *advent* comes from the Latin word for *arrival*. I looked up some synonyms for the word advent and one of them is, *incoming*. Isn’t that what people shouted during WW II when there was a threat of bombs dropping from the sky? We are bombarded with messages of capitalism and Black Friday sales (as if Black Friday and Cyber Monday are holidays)! Despite commercials telling us that we are preparing for a shopping spree, at Advent we are preparing for the arrival of Jesus.

We anticipate the light of the Holy being born in the dark world. That’s the real reason for all the Christmas lights. I realize that retailers would like us to believe the lights are all about the mall, but lights shining in the darkness should remind us of the light of Christ not the light of capitalism. During Advent we prepare our lives and our hearts for the incarnation of God with us. God is about to be born among us! How do we get ready for that?!

(Continued on next page)

This year instead of our Christmas preparations filling our days with too much to do, let's focus on the present. Perhaps instead of stressing out over our to-do lists, we can remember that everything we do is because Jesus is about to be born. We decorate to bring in the light of Christ. We feed the hungry and bring joy with baking. We shop for gifts to express love and generosity. All of the holiday frenzy can be a way to make room for God-with-us.

This December, let's take a breath, be present in the moment. Our worship series this season is, "The Gift of Being Present." Your presence is the real present! There is too much loneliness in the world. The best gift we can give and receive is the gift of our presence. Let's get ready for the coming of Christ by bringing hope, peace, joy, and love through our presence. You are a gift!



## Christmas Card Exchange

Our Advent Christmas theme this year is being present or being a presence in the lives of the people around us. It is a tradition at Hope that we have the opportunity to exchange cards with our church family without the postage expense. It is fun and easy to do. In the narthex (lobby) you will find containers for you to place your cards. During the season don't forget to check the boxes for cards that are placed inside for you. If you would like a copy of our directory, please contact the office so we can provide you with one.

Blessings,

Tonia Patterson (Moderator)

Contact information-321-394-6287 or [toniabandit@aol.com](mailto:toniabandit@aol.com)

## *Hope ‘N Heart’*

Hope ‘N Heart is purring along, doing very good. We will be have 1/2 price sales during December for our many Christmas decorations and items. We will be having a meeting in January to establish a Hope ‘N Heart Team to discuss how the congregation can become involved in a myriad of ways to carry on the success of the store. Hopefully you know the store contributes all their profits to the general fund of Hope UCC. To date we have contributed over \$12,000. That is a significant part of the church budget. Watch for the announcement of the Hope ‘N Heart Team meeting date.

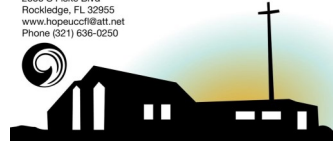
Regarding donations: please be sure that your generous donations are clean and in operating condition. We do not have the time nor staff to help you “clean out your garage or attic” of items you haven’t used or seen in years. We strive to make the thrift store a quality store with items that “work” and are clean.

Hope ‘N Heart Volunteers.



**Thrift Shop**  
Open the 2nd & 3rd  
Friday and Saturday of each month  
Hours are 10am-2pm

**Hope United Church of Christ**  
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Rockledge, FL 32955  
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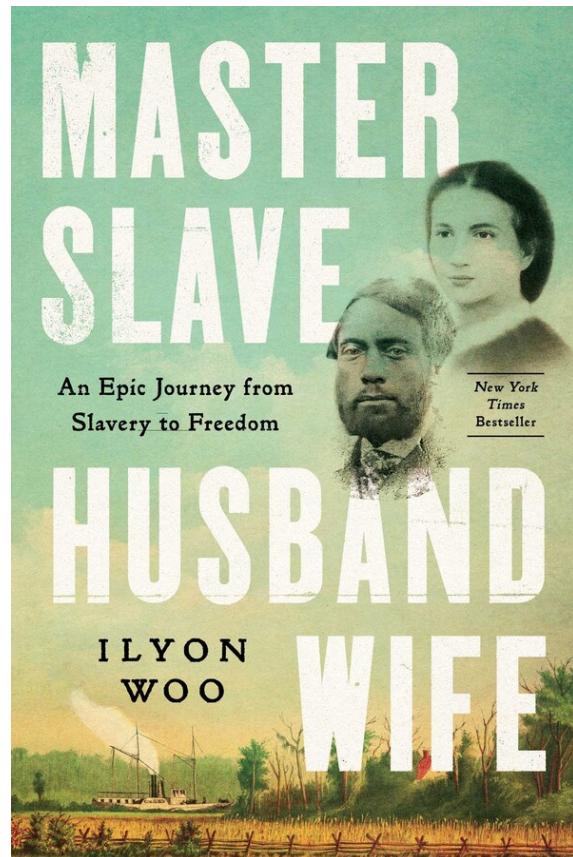
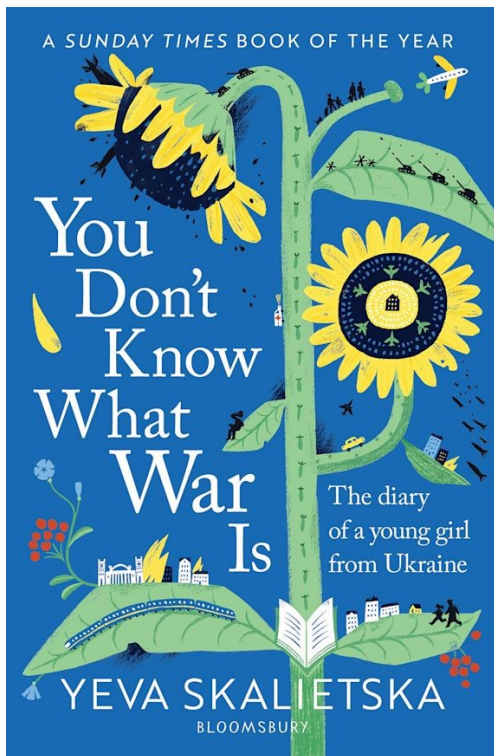


### **Congregational Meeting**

Please plan to stay after church on December 17th for a congregational meeting. We will be looking at the proposed budget for 2024. We will also be presenting a slate of nominees for officers and committee members. There are lots of opportunities open to serve your church. If you would like to explore being on one of the committees please talk with Tonia Patterson, Melanie Goff, Julie Johnson, Cyndi Leonard, or Rev Karen. **Your church needs you!**

Book Club  
December 2023

The Hope Book Club has decided to cancel their December meeting and combine discussions for December's *You Don't Know What War Is*, and January's *Master Slave Husband Wife* at their January 23rd meeting. Watch for reviews of these two books in the January Tidings and enjoy reading during quiet moments during the holidays.



## Growth & Development

It is hard to believe that December is almost here and 2023 is coming to an end. In 2023 the G&D team expanded to include official and non-official members, looking back, we are proud to say that the team has expanded in both congregation and community outreach programs. The Hope congregation hosted a Fall Festival and Space Pride booth and participated in the Pride Parade. Our monthly breakfast and Game nights are growing in popularity each month and the team plans to continue both of these activities in 2024.

We also have one more big Church breakfast planned for December 17 after our service. The crowd favorite, Pancakes, bacon and sausage will be served.

Before we get into 2024, we have one more game night planned for 2023. On December 8, Michele Wood is hosting a "Christmas Songs - Name That Tune". Please join us, the G&D team will be serving Hamburgers and Hot Dogs with all the toppings.

In 2024, the team is looking into additional community outreach events. Lots of ideas are being bounced around and shared with both our church budget and council teams. Some of the ideas include 2 festivals next year, Spring and Fall. We are also discussing hosting a monthly Community Market by reaching out to local vendors and providing table space within our social hall. All Input Welcome!

We hope everyone enjoys the upcoming Holidays.



Our Wheelbarrow Ministry was able to provide 110 items to the Sharing Center in the month of November.

Don't forget your donation when you come to worship!

## The Deacons Corner

Advent is just around the corner and it's time for our traditional Hanging of the Greens where we assemble to decorate the church sanctuary for the holidays. Many of our elves have busily wrapped gift boxes for our set and theme from the Worship Design Workshop series, The Gift of Presence. Please come join us on Saturday, December 2 at 9:00 a.m. to join in the festivities. All are welcome!

Throughout Advent, Hope is collecting \$10.00 donations to send to Church World Service for blankets that are sent to people in crisis both locally and globally. The UCC is one of the church denominations that supports Church World Service. The theme is "Blanket the World in Love". Donations can be made in honor of or in memory of loved ones. A donation of \$10.00 purchases one blanket. The names of families and their loved ones will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletin. The deadline for donations is December 17.

Speaking of Christmas Eve, we are having our regular Sunday morning service as well as a Christmas Eve candle lighting service in the evening. We are also having a Christmas day service.

The nominating committee is looking for people to serve, and to date, we have two openings on the Deacons Committee. Please see Julie Johnson, Chairman of Deacons and nominating committee member if you are interested in knowing more and are considering serving your church. We meet on the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. on zoom if you want to find out more about this committee.

Merry Advent and Christmas!



## Christian Education Committee

The Christian Education Committee will be hosting a Christmas Potluck on December 10th. There will be a Christmas cookie exchange and we will be playing M & M Bingo. Bring a dish to share and your table setting so we can do our part for the environment. Please come and enjoy the fun.



If you are interested in being a part of the Christmas Cookie Exchange This is what you need to do:

- 1: Make 4 dozen of your favorite Christmas cookies
- 2: Make at least 10 to 15 recipe copies to share
- 3: One dozen of your cookies needs to be on separate plate for a sharing table
- 4: Then you get to take home 3 dozen assorted cookies that you didn't make.

### Christmas Fund

This collection is taken up to help retired pastors and staff of the UCC who need financial assistance in their final years. We will be collecting on December 24th at both services for this important deed.

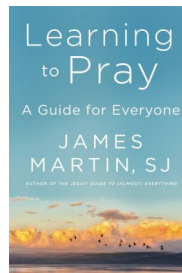
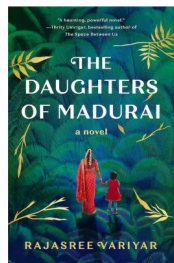
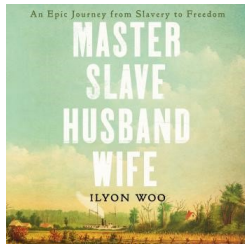






## **HOPE Book Club Reading List 2023 - 2024**

- January            You Don't Know What War Is: a diary of a young girl from Ukraine - Yeva Skalietska
- January            Master Slave Husband Wife: an epic journey from slavery to freedom - Ilyon Woo
- February           The Daughters of Madurai - Rajasree Variyar
- March              Learning to Pray: a guide for everyone - James Martin
- April                While Time Remains: a North Korean defector's search for freedom in America - Yeonmi Park
- May                 The Water Dancer - Ta-Nehisi Coates





Zoom Mtg. ID. for Worship Services  
**321 636 0250**

- 12/2 Hanging of the Greens
- 12/3 Communion Service
- 12/5 Trustees Mtg.
- 12/7 Christian Ed. Mtg.
- 12/8 Thrift Store
- 12/8 Game Night
- 12/9 Thrift Store
- 12/10 Worship Service
- 12/11 Justice & Witness Mtg.
- 12/12 Council Mtg.
- 12/15 Thrift Store
- 12/16 Thrift Store
- 12/17 Worship Service
- 12/17 Congregational Mtg.
- 12/21 Stewardship Mtg.
- 12/23 Women on the Move Luncheon
- 12/24 Worship Service
- Christmas Eve Service 6:30 PM**
- 12/26 Growth & Dev. Mtg.
- 12/28 Deacons Mtg.



- 12/1 Lexi Kaschafsky
- 12/2 Susan Vincent
- 12/12 Netta Elam
- 12/16 Justin Smith
- 12/17 Rebecca Carroll
- 12/19 Gerry Adams



- 12/14 Melanie Goff & Karen Lehr

**Ongoing Events at Hope**

**Coffee Hour**

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 am  
Zoom Mtg. No. 425 599 5598

**Theology on Tap**

Will resume in January

General revenue needed  
each month: \$9,864.25  
Total received in  
November \$12,787.79

CWS-Blanket Fund  
\$110.00

## *This 'n That*

The Hanging of the Greens is December 2 at 9 am. We need volunteers to help decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.



### **Angel Tree**

The angel tree is an opportunity to give the church a present. There will be a small tree in the sanctuary with gift tags on it. The tags will have suggestions of “gifts” that are needed. The donations this year are for our Shepherds Fund and the Trustees committee.

The Shepherds Fund is available for church members who need a little helping hand for emergency financial needs.

The Trustee committee is in charge of church maintenance and many other tasks. They can use some help to purchase needed items to help in this process.

If you would like to participate in this giving opportunity, take a tag from the tree and return it in an envelope with the cash or a check for the item and place it the offering plate on Sunday. You can also mail it to the church or give it to the church secretary. If you are a Zoom attendee and would like to choose a tag you can contact me and I will let you know what some of the suggested gifts are on the tree.

I thank you for your presence in the life of our church. You are a gift!

Blessings,

Tonia Patterson (Moderator)

Contact Information-321-394-6287 or [toniabandit@aol.com](mailto:toniabandit@aol.com)