We’ll take seven weeks to complete our journey through Advent this year.

What’s different about Advent this year? In a move back to the roots of Advent, we’ll be engaging with the season for seven weeks instead of the traditional four. (See the background article on Page 4.)

The theme for the season is “Gifts of Darkness, Gifts of Light.” The image for the season is a night sky over a countryside, which you will see repeatedly during the seven weeks. (see above)

Watch for a special banner made by Jill Sarkodie-Mensah that will appear in the sanctuary.

Extended Advent begins on Nov. 8, which also is the end of the stewardship campaign and is the Sunday the congregation makes its pledges for the coming year.

Also on Nov. 8, in an effort to gather items before the bitter winter cold arrives, the congregation is asked to bring in warm coats, jackets, blankets, gloves and hats for guests of our Friday Community and Sunday breakfasts.

Later that week, on Friday, Nov. 13, UUMC will host a spaghetti dinner 5 to 7 p.m. to benefit the Syracuse Westside Urban Mission. Tickets are a minimum donation of $6 per person or you can buy a family ticket — $25 family for up to seven people. Call the church office if you are interested in helping out.

Thanksgiving Sunday, Nov. 22, will include the traditional cornucopia. After worship, the congregation

Movement toward one city UM church continues

The concept of creating one United Methodist Church in Syracuse with eight congregations and campuses continues to be a work in progress.

It was initiated by the bishop, the Crossroads District superintendent and the Cabinet in January 2014. A Leadership Team was formed with representatives from each congregation to guide and recommend to the congregations a process for moving forward.

There were draft documents, retreats, study and much discussion. The congregations worked together on several projects.

In the spring, each congregation voted on how it wanted to proceed,
Darkness and light of Advent each contain gifts for us

Our theme this Advent is Gifts of Darkness, Gifts of Light.

I’ve had questions from believers and “seekers” about their dark times.

All of us have dark times. We have to at some point in our lives navigate darkness.

Some believers, during the dark times, have felt guilty for questioning God about the darkness.

Questions such as “why” or “how long” are common and very human. Some have worried that they don’t have enough faith. All of these thoughts and fears in our darkness are real.

The truth is, life is not always smiles, roses and butterflies. We all have times of sadness, doubt or fear.

This doesn’t mean we are bad or undeserving of God’s love. It just means we are human.

In fact, without the dark times in our lives we would not be able to appreciate the light times, the good times.

There are gifts in the darkness. Many times the darkness comes just before the next big thing in our lives.

This may be a change in our job, our roles in our family, in a realization about ourselves or our purpose.

Many times the darkness comes out of fear of “what’s next.” The “what’s next” is not always a question we willingly answer or accept. The fear of the “what’s next” may keep us in darkness for quite some time.

The most important thing to remember is God is faithful. God is faithfully waiting with you in the darkness.

God’s presence may be the twinkle of hope you feel in the dark times. You may feel the twinkle of hope several times and then retreat back into the darkness before at last you actually can feel hopeful.

Darkness teaches us about ourselves — the good, bad and the ugly. The darkness gives us compassion for others and hopefully for ourselves. The darkness is a time of waiting. A time to remain stagnant so that when the time is right we are ready, prepared for “what’s next.”

The gifts of darkness lead us to the gifts of light. We may feel this when we do come out of the darkness of a life situation and see the world, our world, “in a new light.”

Everything seems different. The sky is more vibrant. The flowers and leaves seem to be more colorful. The food we eat tastes better.

The truth is all these things have remained constant. It is we who have changed. Just as God stays constant, remaining faithful as we change.

Advent is a time of darkness. This is the time of year in which we have the shortest days.

Advent is also a time of darkness in that many people, in Jesus’ time, had no hope for the coming Messiah.

Advent is a time of anticipation. A time in which an unexpected Messiah was born so many years ago in the most unexpected way.

This Advent season will remember the gifts of darkness as we anticipate the hope in the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as we will remember our gifts of light through the birth and life Jesus we will remember and honor the gifts of darkness that shape us on our journey of faith.

Peace,
Pastor Alicia

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ALTAR FLOWERS were given:

- in loving memory of Erma Bowes Berwick, who was for many years a devoted member of UUMC.
- by Barbara and Jerry Cargo in loving memory of their parents, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Crossman and Mr. & Mrs. Francis Cargo, and brothers John and David Cargo.
- by Beth Drew in honor and memory of friends and family.
- by a longtime member of UUMC for everyone to enjoy this beautiful fall day.

Flowers were given to Nelson Price, Martha Sutter, Dick Hunt, Diane Tarbell, Larry Myers, Betsy Wiggins, Phyllis Wright and Cheryl.

Flowers were delivered by Barbara Fought, Beth Drew, Peter Swords, Joyce Flynn, Lee Potter, Starke Donnally, Jim Wiggins and Ginny Dewey.

**Charge Conference**

Our Charge Conference, held with the other Syracuse city United Methodist churches, will be at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 4 at Erwin First UMC, 920 Euclid Ave.
Outreach Ministry

UUMC to get Little Free Library to share with community

I brought something for us. It’s something we can all be a part of.

It will provide a quiet method of outreach to our neighbors.

I brought a “Little Free Library” for UUMC.

The “Little Free Library” movement began in Wisconsin in 2009 by a fellow named Todd Bol.

Todd’s mom was a teacher, who loved books and reading and worked hard to ensure those around her had access to books.

Finding her home filled to the rafters with books, Todd, with ideas of recycling, built a model of a one-room schoolhouse with a space within for books.

He mounted this on a post in his front yard, hung a sign stating “Free Books” and to his surprise, the compliments and visitors poured in.

Quickly, he built several more little libraries, packed them with books and gave them to friends, each with a sign stating “Free Books.”

Todd’s efforts were quickly noticed by the folk at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Todd, with his new friends, felt there was enough interest to create a “worldwide movement.”

Referencing the works of Andrew Carnegie, who supported 2,509 free public libraries at the turn of the century; Lutie Stearns, a librarian who brought books to 1,400 locations throughout Wisconsin with her “traveling little library” until 1914; and grassroots literacy movements in Sri Lanka, India, and other countries worldwide, Todd defined the mission and purpose of the “Little Free Library”: to promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges worldwide and to build a sense of community as we share skills, creativity and wisdom across generations.

Todd hired Henry Miller, an Amish farmer, to become the primary craftsman of the little libraries. Henry’s commitments involve repurposing.

Our library will be built from material salvaged from tornado-destroyed barns throughout Wisconsin. It will be weatherproof, with a durable door and roof.

Building Superintendent Tim Neiss will assist me in mounting it above the snow levels near the Peale entrance.

It will come to us with a collection of books to be placed within, but I have plans to augment these with book offerings from the congregation and from UUMC’s library.

We will become a registered member with a registration number and be added to a worldwide map.

We will be a part of the Little Free Library Community where the stewards of libraries dialogue on happenings in their areas with their libraries.

— Galyn Murphy-Stanley
Outreach Coordinator

Galyn Murphy-Stanley

A Little Free Library at Barry Park in Syracuse.

Music of the season from two UUMC choirs and LaFayette Community Band

CONTINUED from Page 1
will head downstairs to stuff bags full of Thanksgiving dinner items that will be distributed to our Friday Community guests on Nov. 24.

Dec. 1 the LaFayette Community Band returns for its annual evening concert with musical selections for the holidays and more.

The Senior Choir will present its special Advent music during worship on Dec. 6.

The next Sunday, Dec. 13, the Handbell Choir is scheduled to play, and the Advent Luncheon potluck and Christmas carol sing will be held after worship.

The Neighborhood Christmas Dinner will be the evening of Dec. 21, and Christmas Eve will have the pageant featuring our children.
Why should Advent become a journey of seven weeks?

What is Advent?
The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word adventus, meaning “coming.” During the fourth and fifth centuries, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany. Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer and fasting to prepare for this celebration, and there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the sixth century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the “coming” they had in mind was not Christ’s first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in glory.

It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ’s first coming at Christmas.

Today, Christian Advent symbolizes God’s people waiting for the full expression of God’s eternal kingdom just as Israel, at the end of the Old Testament, was waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt.

In the same way, the church, during Advent, celebrates in commemoration of that first coming and in expectation of the coming Reign of God on earth.

Why an Extended Advent?
In its origin, the season of Advent was nearly seven weeks. The four-week Advent was introduced in Rome in the seventh century, but this was not widely adopted in other Western churches until the 12th or 13th century.

The Orthodox still observe a longer Advent.

By the time of the 16th century Western reformation, few remembered that Advent had once been longer and the season was fixed as four weeks and as the beginning of the church year.

In the 16th century, office parties, the commercialization of the season, special music events at schools and across the community, planning for trips to distant friends and relatives and extravagant home and yard celebrations did not crowd out the purpose of this season of waiting and reflection.

And so, Extended Advent is somewhat of a counter-cultural move.

The extended season has time to move gradually from the initial and primary focus of Advent, which is reflection, waiting, and planning for, not just a baby, but for the Reign of God on earth, to the annual rehearsal and celebration of the life and ministry of Jesus with the Nativity.

What will be different?
As we reviewed UUMC’s activities during this extended season, we realized that it incorporated Stewardship Sunday, Thanksgiving and two important outreach projects, the Thanksgiving Bags and the Winter Clothing Collection.

As we talked about it, people said it would feel weird to be singing Christmas carols before the leaves had finished falling. When would we decorate the church for Thanksgiving and Christmas?

The good news is that an Extended Advent seems like a good fit for everything.

- What better way to begin the church year than with making our pledges to the church to support it with “our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service”?
- We won’t be singing Christmas carols in November. Numbers 195 to 216 in our hymnal are all Advent hymns and as well as a few prayers and responses. Last year we used exactly two of these. This year we will enjoy these hymns, singing some familiar hymns and learning some unfamiliar gems that have themes of the coming of the Reign of God as described in Mary’s Song and all of which have a theme of foreshadowing the fulfillment of God’s promises.
- Giving thanks for what we have each been given and sharing our gifts with others also seem to be a perfect fit in this time of reflection on God’s goodness to us and our understanding that what we have been given is not ours to hoard, but God’s to share.
- At the same time, the church that incorporates Stewardship Sunday, Thanksgiving and two important outreach projects, the Thanksgiving Bags and the Winter Clothing Collection.

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City UM congregations reported to be more stable

CONTINUED from Page 1
speedily and immediately – a “fast track” – or on a more deliberate pace. Erwin First and University voted for the fast track. The others for a more deliberate track.

At the May 2015 annual conference, two significant steps were taken: the bishop appointed four clergy to serve The United Methodist Church of Syracuse (no assignments were made to specific congregations).

Secondly, the conference formally closed Rockefeller United Methodist Church. Its members have dispersed to other congregations, and the conference trustees have taken over the church property and assets and will determine their disposition.

Each of the new clergy was assigned by the clergy team leader to at least two congregations: B.J. Norrix, clergy team leader, was assigned Erwin First and Brown Memorial. Alicia Wood was assigned to University, James Street and development of a United Methodist presence at Destiny, USA.

Andy Anderson is at Bellevue Heights and Gethsemane, and Jee Hae Song goes to Hope Korean and St. Paul’s. She has still not arrived from Korea due to visa delays. Those congregations have interim pastors.

At the Oct. 13 Leadership Team meeting, the following occurred:

- BJ reported a strategy to pause during summer and early fall to allow congregations and clergy time to get acquainted, and time for several congregations to become more stable, to “stop the free fall and decline.”
- He reported greater stability in each of the congregations and an increase in church school attendance and worship, almost double at Erwin First and increasing in others.
- Our purpose is “to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the city of Syracuse.”
- The Leadership Team set Oct. 28 to begin Hand to Plow study, prayer and relationship building for clergy, one representative from each congregation and members of the Leadership Team. The group will meet the second and fourth Wednesdays each month. Doug Randall will represent UUMC.
- Set Nov. 21 to start Hand to Plow monthly gatherings of members of all the congregations for study, prayer, relationship building and visioning “new ways of being the church.”
- Confirmed Nov. 7 Fall Festival, a youth ministry kickoff for 13- to 18-year-olds.
- The Syracuse UM Churches Mission Team reported on plans for the spaghetti dinner at UUMC Nov. 13, a fundraiser for Syracuse Westside Urban Mission at Brown Memorial.
- Confirmed plans to incorporate in order to receive and disperse funds. Each congregation will elect members to the Board of Directors.
- Beth Drew serves as UUMC representative to the Leadership Team with Nelson Price as alternate. Mike Nevin, Erwin First layperson, is chair.

— Nelson Price

People/Prayers

PRAYERS REQUESTED:

- For those in military service: Jim Pettyjohn and Matt Fischer

Sunday, October 4

- Cynthia: That I stay in the path of God and his holy word.
- Elise: Prophet Jesus, Prepare me to perform your prophecy to harvest & pray away my poor decisions.
- Kathy: Grateful for all of my friends, family and my work clients.
- Kiki: Peace and forgiveness for all, families, lovers, businessmen and women.
- Lacey: For tomorrow’s turbulent trials to go through with flying colors (A+ status)
- Matthew: If anyone has odd jobs, call me. Thank you

Give your life to God

Regarding senseless violence: Doing nothing is not the answer.

For our country to work harder to prevent so many people who use guns to kill people.

Victims and families of the Oregon shooting.

For Doctors without Borders and their losses in Afghanistan.

Sunday, Oct. 11

- Barb & Jerry and Ginny & Bob: Healing prayers for Phyllis Wright, who is at Iroquois with pneumonia.
- Jeff: Pray that this job goes through OK.
- Logan & Kathy: Prayers of love and peace for Logan on the passing of his grand-

See PEOPLE, Page 6
November birthdays
5 — Lynn Steenberg, Ed Tillapaugh
6 — Monica Shworles
7 — Phyllis Wright
10 — Michael Grome
14 — Daniel Kirkley
15 — Jim Virgo
16 — Jenny Hicks, Brian Finlayson-Schueler
18 — Jerusha Morgan
19 — Robin Best, Connie Wilson
24 — Krystina Nilsson
25 — Roger MacDonald, Joe Tompkins
30 — Kate Fagut, Greg Allen, Mary Klepper

People/Prayers

CONTINUED from Page 5

mother, Betty.

• Peter: For Congress to make a better federal budget that avoids cuts in the safety net and reduces Pentagon waste.

• Robert: Prayers for Mary Wilson and daughter Jo-Ann.

• Prayers and condolences for Jan Garman and family on the death of her sister, Pat McFall on Oct. 4.

THANKS AND PRAISE

Sunday, Oct. 4

• A happy birthday to the amazing Nelson Price.

• Grateful for Barbara and Nelson for opening their home to college students and young adults.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 1

Sunday the 1st
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade, Pettengill Center
10 a.m. Adult Bible Study, History Room Annex
11 a.m. Worship, Pastor Wood, Communion
11:15 a.m. Sunday School for adults with special needs
12:15 p.m. Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:30 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm

Monday the 9th
7 p.m. Handbell Choir

Wednesday the 11th
9 a.m. Staff Meeting

Thursday the 12th
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir

Friday the 13th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 15

Second Advent Sunday the 15th
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade, Pettengill Center
10 a.m. Adult Bible Study, History Room Annex
11 a.m. Worship, Pastor Wood
11:15 a.m. Sunday School for adults with special needs
12:15 p.m. Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:30 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm

Wednesday the 18th
9 a.m. Staff Meeting

Thursday the 19th
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir

Friday the 20th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 8

First Advent Sunday the 8th
9 a.m. Community Breakfast, Fellowship Hall
10 a.m. Contemporary Issues
10 a.m. Sunday School, kindergarten-12th grade, Pettengill Center
10 a.m. Adult Bible Study, History Room Annex
11 a.m. Worship, Pastor Wood
11:15 a.m. Sunday School for adults with special needs
12:15 p.m. Fellowship, Gathering Rm
12:30 p.m. Soup and Sermon Chat, Chappell Rm

Wednesday the 18th
9 a.m. Staff Meeting

Thursday the 19th
7:30 p.m. Senior Choir

Friday the 20th
10 a.m. - noon Friday Community

Finance Corner

Pledging Update
2015 total pledges: $210,572
Paid to date: $149,000
Non-pledge contr.: $23,860

Sounds of the Spirit Visual Fund
Donations received $79,519
Expenses paid $75,901
Current balance $3,618

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Syracuse, NY
Permit No. 2761

Return service requested
Dated material
Our choir sang from the pews.
Children make paper prayer chain of names from morning’s prayer slips.
The completed prayer chain.
“This I Believe”
By Congregation Members
For Stewardship Campaign
3 photos
Sunday School resumed Sept. 13, and children made bracelets during that time.
Blessing of Children
Oct. 18, 2015
2 photos
Community Breakfast
In September

Photo by Nelson Price
Steve leads the Sunday School class for adults with disabilities on Rally Day.