



## MUSINGS

Dear Friends,

Each year, we remember the first Christmas, the proclamation of an angel to frightened shepherds, and a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!" This year, the heavenly host is notably absent from the night sky and peace seems as elusive as ever. But that won't stop us from preparing for the possibility with decorations and gifts; won't stop us from lighting a candle for peace on the second Sunday of Advent; won't stop us from sending holiday greetings of peace to friends and family; won't stop us from singing about peace in numerous carols and songs; and won't stop us from praying for it.

Recently, the clergy group with which I meet wanted to do something concrete to try and make some peace locally. With the rise of violence toward Jewish and Muslim people in the U.S. and around the world, we decided to reach out to local synagogues and mosques by sending a letter of solidarity and peace. Here are a few lines from that letter:

We want you to know that we stand in solidarity with you,  
our neighbors...

We affirm the value of your religious and spiritual tradition...

We firmly believe that our community is enriched by the diversity of religious  
and spiritual beliefs to be found here...



In a few days, several members of that same clergy group will host an ecumenical prayer service for peace at St. David's Episcopal Church on December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1 p.m. We hope that you'll consider joining us.

Sometimes, it's a struggle to know how to respond when conflict threatens the security of our world and innocent people suffer. We can feel overwhelmed and powerless. We can become convinced that there's just nothing we can do to make a difference. But the truth is, there's always something we can do.

Perhaps you know someone who needs to hear a message of solidarity and affirmation. Maybe there's a neighbor or coworker that would feel seen and valued by a plate of holiday goodies. It could be that simply gathering with other people of faith to pray for peace will make it seem just a little more possible.

However you choose to do it this season, let's all try and make the Christmas promise of peace a little more of a reality in our world.

Blessings and peace,

*Brandon*

Brandon Perrine  
Senior Minister

## ADULT STUDY



### *The Making of a Messiah: a 4-week Advent Study*

Join Brandon Perrine and a group of fellow New Englanders this Advent season for a 4-week exploration of the five 'hidden' women in Matthew's genealogy (and one additional woman from Luke) to give us a fuller understanding of who Jesus was and what his life means for us today. We'll meet weekly on Wednesday evenings through December 20, with supper at 5:30 pm and study from 6:00-7:00 pm in Friendship Hall. There is no cost to participate and all are welcome.

## ORION ENSEMBLE CONCERT

The Orion Ensemble continues its 31<sup>st</sup> season of excellent chamber music with its concert at New England Church on Sunday, December 3, at 7:00 pm. Featured music will be works by Samuel Coleridge Taylor and Dmitri Shostakovich. Guest musicians are Mathias Tacke, violin, and Stephen Boe, viola.



All who attend are invited to a reception in the Narthex following the concert.

Tickets may be purchased online at [www.orionensemble.org](http://www.orionensemble.org) or at the door for \$30/adult, \$25/senior, and \$15/student. Details are available in the Orion Ensemble brochures on display in the Marketplace.

## WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS



Christmas Bells, Silver Bells, Jingle Bells! Whichever bell is your favorite, join us in Friendship Hall on December 9 at 9:30 am for breakfast and a special visit from the the New England Carillon, as they "Ring in the Season". Bring a dish to share (and a friend), and stay for a bell choir treat to get you in a holiday mood. Please sign up in the office or on the church website. See you all in December!



### “A World of Christmas”

On December 25, the birth of Jesus will be re-enacted on deserts, forests, islands, jungles and mountain tops. The world is immense, and the reach of this story encircles it. We sometimes forget that we are not the center of it all. Our European ancestors were not the keepers of the story. Wander the Narthex this month and you will see how it looks to celebrate the nativity in many niches and crannies of our Earth, from Pacific Islands to South America to Africa and Asia. Our congregation has collected these treasures. Celebrate them and ponder.

Last month's Opportunity Festival reminded us how important is everyone's voice. Please share your thoughts on what more you want from **The Beloved Community Committee** on Racism and Social Justice. Email us through [kimberly@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:kimberly@newenglandchurch.org).

**Attention all Cookie Bakers and Buyers!**  
On Sunday, December 3, we will hold our annual Cookie Walk in Friendship Hall after the 10:00 am service.

Please deliver your baked goods to church on Friday, December 1 from 11am-2:00pm, Saturday, December 2 from 9am-11am, or bring them with you on Sunday, December 3 and drop them off before the 10:00 am service. Please contact [kimberly@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:kimberly@newenglandchurch.org) if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your help with this fun, festive, annual tradition!

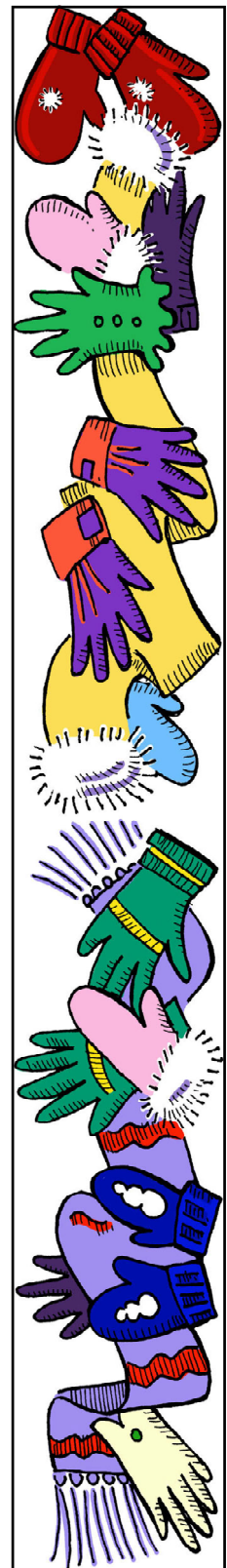


## SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING



NECC Men's Fellowship will ring bells for the Salvation Army this Christmas season on Tuesday, December 5, from 5-7pm. You can still sign up on December 3 in the church parlor for one or two hour shifts. Sign up is for both men and women. We still have several locations that need ringers. Bells, buckets, and aprons are at the ringing locations.

Location assignments will be made in the church parlor after both services on Sunday, December 3. A delicious dinner will be served at Jim and Jan Mamminga's home, 1636 W. Downer in Aurora after the bell ringing. The dinner is open to ringers and non-ringers alike. Come join the members of the church in this season of giving.





## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES



5:00 pm Family Service

9:00 pm Service of Readings and Carols

### \*Special Giving for Guests of Hesed House

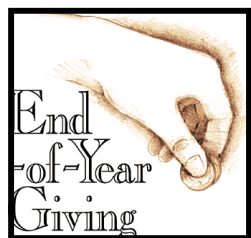
This Christmas Eve, we invite you to bring a special gift with you to our 5 p.m. or 9 p.m. service to lay at the manger. To share some holiday cheer with the guests of Hesed House, we are collecting cotton hats and gloves, all sizes of pull-up diapers, and gifts cards (Walmart, Target, Dollar General, Aldi, Walgreens, or local restaurants). Gifts should be wrapped to present during the service.

## HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The church office will be closed  
December 25-  
January 1  
for the Christmas and  
New Year's holidays.



## DONATION DEADLINE



All donations must be either postmarked or received in the church office by December 31 in order to be credited as a 2023 donation. Please make every effort to complete your pledge before the year ends. Thank you.



## POP-UP CHOIR AND CHRISTMAS



The Chancel Choir offers its thanks to the many people who 'swelled' the chancel in our October Pop-Up Choir. We sang an anthem called "Love Has Broken Down the Walls," which described the many ways through which the sacred love we experience through Christ can eliminate what separates us. In many ways, the notion of a "Pop Up" choir is exactly that, as it opens its arms to

everyone. Please add our next Pop-Up-Choir Sunday, January 21, to your schedule. We hope you will help us swell our ranks even more.

By the way--the Chancel Choir will be singing at the 10:00 am and 9:00 pm services for Christmas. If you are interested in joining us in learning a few beautiful works for these celebrations, you are always welcomed to sing with us in our Wednesday evening 7:00 pm rehearsals. We sing, enjoy the expression of community, and, to be frank, have more fun than choirs should (what happens in choir stays in choir). Singing is not only a song for us: it is a prayer. Come join and pray with us.

Your music director, Paul

## HANGING OF THE GREENS

Join us as we transform Johnson Chapel and the Sanctuary with decorations for Christmas and celebrate the First Sunday of Advent on Sunday, December 3 at 8:30 & 10:00 am.

If you would like to participate by placing one of the decorations, please stop in the Narthex before entering Johnson Chapel or the Sanctuary.

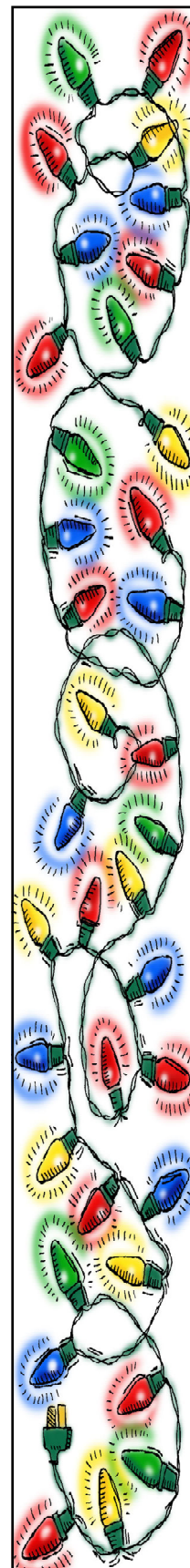


## THE CHRISTMAS FUND



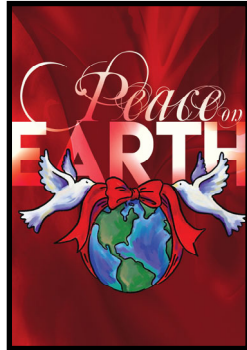
The money raised through the Christmas Fund Offering provides the primary revenue stream for the Ministerial Assistance programs of the UCC. These programs of Annuity Supplementation, Health Benefits Supplementation, Emergency Grants and Christmas Gifts for low-income retirees are available to both the

active and retired clergy and lay employees. *We will collect this special offering on Sunday, December 10.*





## A Service of Prayers for Peace in a Time of Global Unrest

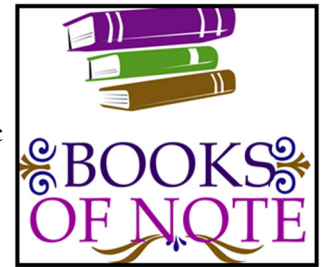


With ongoing violence around the world, several local congregations are coming together to pray for peace at 1 p.m. on December 3, 2023. Join other people of faith from Wesley UMC, Becoming ELCA, St. David's Episcopal, and New England Congregational Church in a service of prayer and hope at St. David's Episcopal Church, 701 North Randall Road, Aurora, IL. Together, we will bear witness to the power of authentic spiritual community and the transforming power of love.

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## BOOKS OF NOTE

The Books of Note book discussion group is open to all. New members are welcome at any time. Attend via Zoom on the third Tuesday of the month from 7:00-8:00 pm. Read one book or all. It's up to you! Books are suggested by participants and voted on twice a year. Contact Sue Reimer to obtain a book and the Zoom link.



December 19-"An Elderly Woman is Up to No Good" by Helene Tursten. Maud is an irascible 88-year-old Swedish woman with no family, no friends, and... no qualms about a little murder. Over the course of her adventures—or misadventures—this little bold lady will handle a crisis with a local celebrity who has her eyes on Maud's apartment, foil the engagement of her long-ago lover, and dispose of some pesky neighbors. But when the local authorities are called to investigate a dead body found in Maud's apartment, will Maud finally become a suspect? Sue Reimer will lead the discussion.

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## FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES



December 8: Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris (2022)

In 1950s London, a widowed cleaning lady sets her heart on a couture Dior dress and plans for an adventure in Paris.

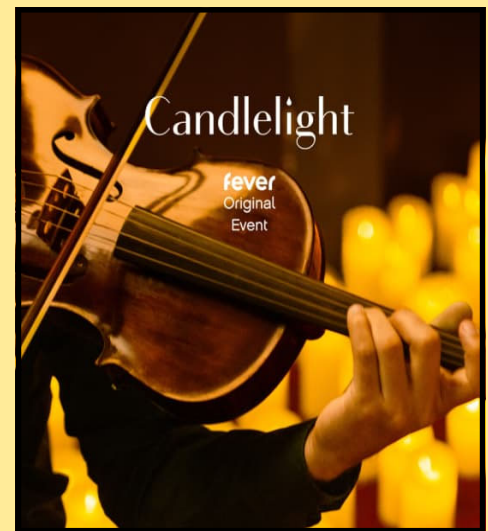
With Lesley Manville.

Presenter: Marsha Carter

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**Candlelight Aurora:**  
**Featuring Vivaldi's Four Seasons & More**  
**Friday, December 8 at 6:15 pm and 8:30 pm**

*Candlelight* concerts bring the magic of a live, multi-sensory musical experience to awe-inspiring locations like never seen before in Aurora. Get your tickets now to discover the music of Vivaldi at New England Congregational Church under the gentle glow of candlelight.



**Program**

*The Four Seasons*. Violin Concerto in G Minor. Op. 8 No. 1 RV 269: "Spring" – Vivaldi  
*The Four Seasons*. Violin Concerto in G Minor. Op. 8 No. 2 RV 315: "Summer" – Vivaldi  
*Thaïs*: Méditation – Jules Massenet  
*Recomposed by Max Richter*: Vivaldi. *The Four Seasons*: "Spring 3" – Max Richter  
*The Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas*: Verano Porteño – Astor Piazzolla  
*Libertango* – Astor Piazzolla  
*The Four Seasons*. Violin Concerto in G Minor. Op. 8 No. 3 RV 293: "Autumn" – Vivaldi  
*The Four Seasons*. Violin Concerto in G Minor. Op. 8 No. 4 RV 297: "Winter" – Vivaldi

**Performers**—Listeso String Quartet

For tickets, go to <https://feverup.com/m/127500>



Do you have our  
 Pictorial Church  
 Directory App yet?

If not, here is the web address to let you know how to download to your devices.  
<https://www.instantchurchdirectory.com/app/>





## ANNUAL REPORTS DUE



Annual reports are due in the church office by Friday, December 15. Please e-mail your report to [Shelley@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:Shelley@newenglandchurch.org). Thank you!

## NECC AAIFP VOLUNTEER DAYS

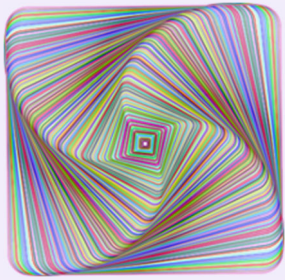
Volunteer to work at the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry—NECC sends volunteers to work in the warehouse and/or to restock shelves every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month from 3:00-4:00pm. The location is 110 Jericho Road, Aurora. Thank you!



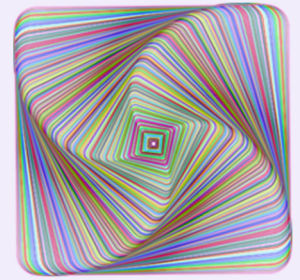
## ADDITIONAL PARKING



Remember that there is overflow parking to the west of our church parking lot, behind the law offices of Don Dickinson. A sign on the front lawn on Galena Blvd directs you to the lot. Those who are able to walk the distance, please park here and leave the church parking lot available for those who can't navigate the longer distance. Thank you!



# VOLUNTEER VORTEX



## Sponsored by the Board of Community Outreach

We, at NECC who desire to make the world a better place, continue to post volunteer opportunities in this section of the Tidings every month. This month, Mutual Ground, one of our strategic partners, has some relevant activities which are described below:

**Mutual Ground's Winter Wonderland Client Shoppe** supports families during the holiday season! You can help us reduce the stress of the holidays and spread joy to client families of Mutual Ground this Holiday Season!

**We are in need of NEW gifts in the following categories:**

Infant/Baby Items (including diapers, wipes, lotions, bottles, etc...)

Toys for all ages (Baby - 12+ years old)

Science sets

Craft sets

Lego Sets

Board games for all ages

Gifts for Teens (small electronics, sports items, hoodies, sweat pants, etc...)

Gift Cards for Teens (\$10, \$20 and \$40 increments)

Adult gifts for men and women

Baking Sets

Small Kitchen Appliances

For more information please contact Krystyna Sarrazin at [ksarrazin@mutualground.org](mailto:ksarrazin@mutualground.org).



## Where and When to drop off donations

Donations for the event can be dropped-off during the following days and times:

Friday, December 1 from 4pm - 7pm

Saturday, December 2 from 10am - 2pm

DROP OFF LOCATION: 120 Gale Street, Aurora.

**\*\*Gifts can also be shipped to:**

Mutual Ground, ATTN: Winter Wonderland, 418 Oak Avenue, Aurora.



**Do you know a high school student who wants to make a difference?**

Mutual Ground's Student Advisory Board is looking for students to join! The Mutual Ground Student Advisory Board provides an opportunity for students in high school to gain valuable volunteer hours, develop leadership skills, provide community support, and prepare for educational or career endeavors.

This amazing group of students come together for monthly meetings to plan awareness activities, plan and run fundraising events, and volunteer at Mutual Ground.

If you have any questions about the Student Advisory Board please contact Betsy Santana at [bsantana@mutualground.org](mailto:bsantana@mutualground.org).

# Tiny Tidings

DECEMBER, 2023



## CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

DEC. 3RD Intergenerational Hanging of the Greens Service @10:00 with Joy Ringers.  
Annual Cookie Walk following the service.

DEC. 10TH Lesson: Christmas Traditions from Around the World

DEC. 17TH Lesson: Stories of Jesus' Birth

DEC. 24TH No KIDS' ZONE or Nursery @ 10:00.  
Family Christmas Eve Service at 5 p.m.

DEC. 31ST No KIDS' ZONE or Nursery @ 10:00.  
Christmas Break

### HESED HOUSE CHRISTMAS LIST:

- Gift Cards (Gas, Dollar Tree or General, Walgreens, Walmart, Target, Aldi, & local restaurants)
- New Winter Hats & Gloves (cotton)
- New warm socks
- Diapers & Pull-ups all sizes
- New Family Sized Toiletries

### LESSONS & CAROLS FAMILY EDITION:

5 p.m. Family Christmas Eve Service is 100% KID FRIENDLY. Wiggling is allowed and shushing is not. Kids will be involved in the telling of the Christmas story as readers, and helping to place elements in the large nativity scene in the front of the sanctuary. The service will be fun, but also meaningful and reflective. And as always, we will sing Silent Night by candlelight. We will also continue the tradition we started last year by inviting families to bring a gift for guests of Hesus House. During the service, families will be invited to bring their gifts forward to the manger. You won't want to miss this beautiful, new Christmas Tradition.

### FALL OVERVIEW:

What an amazing fall we've had for kids & families at New England Church! From our Care-crow Project at Fall Festival, our spooky-fun, All-Grades Halloween Party & Trunk-or-Treat, our well-attended weekly Multi-Cultural Parent-Child Playgroup, and our festive Christmas Ornament Workshop. Not to mention the meaningful lessons we've shared in KIDS' ZONE and Children's Time, and the beautiful music of our Joy Ringers Youth Bell Choir. Wow! Attendance and energy is strong and growing in our kids' programming this year. And none of it would be possible without the tireless efforts of these amazing people: Kimberly Adams, event planner extraordinaire, Cathy & Katie Jepson working musical magic with the Joy Ringers, Thaise Rodriguez & Josely Hernandez, our wonderful new Nursery Attendants, Robin Schmidt for all her Halloween hi-jinks, Marie Wendt whose ideas, encouragement, and suggestions are woven into the fabric of everything, and this list of volunteers who have served in KIDS' ZONE or Nursery this fall: Karen Ronan, Diane Ellis, Jana Ream, Peter & Nikki Heald, Shelby Darché, Nancy Garbe, Sue Hard, Lois Imbrogno, Charlotte Adams, Anna Grometer, Marin Schwab, & Brook Czenk. Thank you also to anyone I may have inadvertently missed. As you can see, it takes a large team of caring people to make our programs work. We are so grateful to everyone who has stepped up to make this fall so fun and meaningful at New England Church!

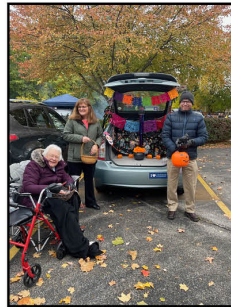
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YOU



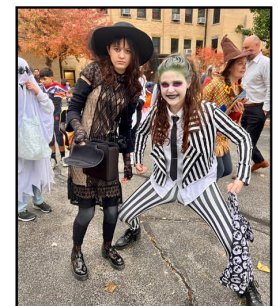
## Children's Time



## Party in Friendship Hall



## Fun Going Trunk or Treating







DECEMBER, 2023

YOUTH CALENDAR

- DEC. 2ND Cookie Walk Set-up 9-11 a.m. in Friendship Hall
- DEC. 3RD Intergenerational Hanging of the Greens Service with Joy Ringers.  
Annual Cookie Walk following the service.  
Confirmation Dinner Gathering 5-7 p.m.
- DEC. 10TH Youth Group @ 10:00. Christmas Around the World.
- DEC. 17TH Youth Group @ 10:00. Christmas Celebration.
- DEC. 24TH No Youth Group @ 10:00. Family Christmas Eve Service 5 p.m.
- DEC. 31ST No Youth Group @10:00. Christmas Break.

THANK YOU!

A great big thank you to all the current staff and volunteers who have put in extra effort to support a continuing solid and vibrant youth program in a time of transition as our Board of Education regroups and assesses our future staffing plans. As Congregationalists, we know that our church is only as strong as we build and sustain it together, so we are grateful for all the helping hands and caring hearts who are pitching in. Thanks!



Confirmation:

Our new Confirmation cohort is off to a great start! They've been working together to cook and share an evening meal and discussing big, important questions like: "What is Confirmation?" "Who/what is God?" and "Who is Jesus?" Senior Minister Brandon Perrine is leading our Confirmation program with support from adult volunteers and will be recruiting some group mentors sometime after the New Year. If you are interested, please contact [brandon@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:brandon@newenglandchurch.org) for details.

Happy Holidays!



# Lessons & Carols Family Edition



Christmas Eve 5PM  
New England Church  
406 W Galena Aurora, IL



*Kid friendly.  
Wiggling welcome.*



## Gift Collection for Guests of Hesus House:

Giftcards for Gas, Dollar Tree/General, Walgreens,  
Walmart, Target, Aldi, local restaurants.

New Winter Hats & Gloves (cotton)/New socks

All sizes of pull-up diapers

Family Sized Toiletries





# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Visit us on the web  
at  
[www.newenglandchurch.org](http://www.newenglandchurch.org)

New England Congregational  
Church-UCC  
406 W. Galena Blvd. Aurora, IL. 60506  
Phone: 630.897.8721  
Fax: 630.897.8744  
Email: [office@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:office@newenglandchurch.org)  
*A Caring Church for Thinking People*

*“God  
Is Still  
Speaking”*



*Senior Minister: Brandon Perrine  
Office Administrator: Shelley Lund  
Director of Children’s Ministries: Desiree Guzman  
Chancel Choir Director: Paul Laprade  
Organist: Marsha Foxgrover  
Assistant Organist: Marilyn Parolini  
Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson  
Director of Community Life: Kimberly Adams  
Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond  
Nursery Attendants: Charlotte Adams,  
Thaise Rodriguez, Josely Hernandez  
Custodian: John Hett  
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Moderator: Josh Ream  
Moderator-elect: Heather Azem  
Treasurer: Andy Sprau  
Clerk: Ida Dunham*