

Methodist the messenger

Rev. Dr. Grace G. Cajuat, Pastor

First United Methodist Church 7520 W. Lapham Street, West Allis, WI 53214

fumcwaoffice@fumcwa.org

414-774-5500

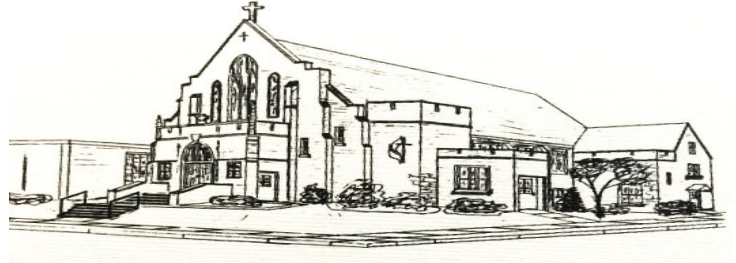
www.fumcwa.org

God cares about you



and so do we

DECEMBER 2024



Members & Friends of FUMCWA,

In darkness, light shines brighter

We celebrated the Reign of Christ Sunday on the last Sunday of November, where our congregation collectively offered our gifts and graces to God during our Stewardship appeal. We presented our gifts in the form of time, talent, resources, service, and witness as a body of Christ.

December brings Advent, which spans the next four Sundays and culminates with Christmas Eve. Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year, where we explore our complex relationship with God—our love and our struggles. The stories we encounter reveal our deep need for God's love amidst darkness, strife, and uncertainty, grounding our anticipation for the Messiah. As Jesus is born, we are reassured of God's presence with us—Emmanuel.

I reflect on whether the seasons dictated the design of the liturgical year or vice versa. The gray days and quickening darkness certainly align with the mood of Advent.

During a recent week at Pine Lake United Methodist Camp for a conference, I found myself waking up early to enjoy a cup of coffee while gazing out at the lake. The quiet meditation in nature has been a blessing. Witnessing four deer bounding in front of me and later seeing a white-tailed hawk gliding overhead in search of prey filled me with awe at the beauty of creation and reminded me of God's presence even in the cold and darkness.

God's presence is the light that brings hope, shining with peace, joy, and love. Let us take the time to be still and recognize God's presence in our lives.

May you feel God's warm embrace.

Pastor Grace



A NOTE FROM OUR LAY LEADER

Advent Greetings Friends

We Wait with Hope and Long for Christ's Return: Each year during Advent, we celebrate Christ's birth and anticipate His return. I love Advent at First Church. I like to treat it much like Lent in my study and preparation. I love the music in the Church. I love the decorations. I love the longest night. I love seeing you all in the sanctuary and the halls.

"O come, O come, Emmanuel,

And ransom captive Israel,

That mourns in lonely exile here,

Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel."

I have been looking forward to this.

I invite you to join us in an Advent Study, using the book **Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation**, by *Will Williamson*. There are two options for you to join in the study discussion--On Sundays with Pastor Grace, starting December 1st, or on Tuesday nights at 7:00 pm via Zoom, starting November 26th. It is a 4-week study.

I hope you will engage with lighting our Advent candles too.

The lyrics of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" serve a dual purpose, perfectly applying both to Israel's hope for Christ's first coming and also our hope as we await His second coming. As we remember Christ's birth this Advent season, we long for His return. We celebrate the new life in Christ we have, yet we still hope for a place with no more grief, no more pain, no more death. Through the promise of salvation, this hope will be fulfilled at His return (Rev. 21:4: He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away).

Advent and Christmas Blessings to all of you. We do indeed celebrate New Life.

Tom Bolton, 414-704-5478 God loves you and so do we. Discipleship Never Ends.



The Church Financial Statement of Activities ending October 31, 2024:

	Year To Date Actual	Year To date Budget	Difference
Giving & Other Income	\$303,567.00	\$231,233.40	\$72,333.60
Expenses	\$321,669.21	\$382,213.50	\$60,544.29
Operating Income/ (Deficit)	\$(18,102.21)	\$(150,980.10)	

Our hope with prayers is that members will continue to give generously as we envision a better and brighter future with goals and strategies to keep FUMCWA healthy, growing, and vital. God cares about you and so do we. Thank you for your financial support to the life and the mission of FUMCWA.

Worship TOGETHER

SCRIPTURE READINGS & Themes December 2024

“Come, Let Us Adore Him”

December 1, 2024, First Sunday of Advent Hope: Preparation
Texts: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

December 8, 2024, Second Sunday of Advent Peace: Passion
Texts: Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

December 15, 2024, Third Sunday of Advent Joy: Presence
Texts: Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-18

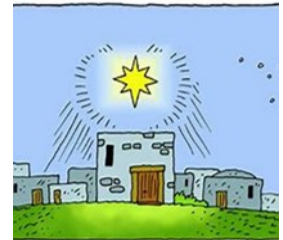
December 22, 2024, Fourth Sunday of Advent Love: Promise
Texts: Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-45

December 24, 2024, Christmas Eve JOY!
Texts: Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-20

December 29, 2024, First Sunday after Christmas Day Covenant Service
Texts: Colossians 3: 12-17; Luke 2: 41-52

BRUNCH IN BETHLEHEM ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1st, After Worship in

Fellowship Hall : Come and share this holiday tradition as we usher in the Christmas season. Enjoy a wonderful brunch, fellowship, and the retelling of the Nativity Story by our church youth. This is a great opportunity to invite family, friends, and neighbors to experience the love and fellowship of FUMCWA.



UWF Christmas Bake Shop: On December 8th, please join us in the Fireside Room for our Christmas Bake Shop. We will be open from 8:30 to 10:30 am and again from 11:30 am to 12:00 pm. Please note that the Fireside Room will be closed during the church service. We will offer a variety of sweet treats and holiday jewelry. Preordered gingerbread cookies can be picked up on that day. This sale will be on a smaller scale compared to our past cookie sales, but we hope you will come and purchase some delicious holiday treats!

FILL THE STOCKING ADVENT Mission Project: The Children’s Sunday School classes will be collecting socks for the homeless during Advent again this year. Did you know that socks are the most frequently requested – but least frequently donated clothing items at homeless shelters? That’s why every Advent Season, FUMCWA collects new socks to benefit homeless people in our community. Please bring new socks for men, women, and children and put them in the large red Christmas Stocking in The Gathering Room. Thanks for helping our homeless neighbors right here in our community.



FUMCWA MINISTRIES

Church Library Ministry (The Bernice Nailen Memorial Library): During this busy season of Christmas and holiday preparations, take a few minutes each day to contemplate, read, and pray. Visiting the Library Cart (located in the Gathering Room) makes it a convenient and quick process to check out a book. Merry Christmas from Your Library Committee



Food Pantry Ministry: Thank you so much for all Pastor Grace's and the congregation's support. Pastor Grace is a welcome addition to our food pantry and greets everyone as they come in. She has much enthusiasm and energy!!

We are grateful for the food and personal care products donated and the monetary donations given through the Good Samaritan Fund. We are so thankful for grants and anonymous giving. These donations will help us meet the needs of the many people who request assistance with food and other needs. Any nonperishable foods are welcome, but please note expiration dates.

The dollar stores have many of the items that are needed. During the cold weather, we also try to provide hats, mittens, or gloves, so any help would be appreciated. This is a very caring congregation, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

The November Good Samaritan Offering: \$562.25

PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED FOR DECEMBER:

LAUNDRY DETERGENT AND ANY VARIETY OF CEREAL



United Women in Faith:

On Monday, November 11th, Unity Circle had a wonderful presentation from Rooted and Rising (formerly known as United Methodist Children's Services). It is a wonderful organization and helps so many children and families.

On December 8th, please come to the Fireside Room for our Christmas Bake Shop. We will be open from 8:30-10:30 am and 11:30 am-12:00 pm. The Fireside Room will be closed during the church service. We will be offering a variety of sweet treats and holiday jewelry. Preordered gingerbread cookies will be available for pickup on that day. This sale will be on a smaller scale than our past cookie sales. We hope you come and join us and purchase some delicious treats.

On Monday, December 9th, Unity Circle will have the Installation of Officers and Christmas Party. Please remember to bring items for Channel 4's Baby Shower to this meeting. Also, don't forget to bring the food item you signed up for. We have had a great year and look forward to great meetings in 2025. We invite anyone interested in our group to join us for our February 10th meeting! We are growing!!

There will be no Unity Circle in January.

Laurie Halvorsen, Senior Ministries Coordinator: In December, Senior League looks forward to our annual Christmas luncheon on Wednesday, December 4th. It's always a special meal with your friends and a wonderful program of Christmas music. Tickets for this event have already been purchased. Fifty of our Senior Leaguers will see "Miracle on 34th Street" at the Fireside on December 11th and have a fantastic day together. This will end our programs for our 49th year of Senior League together! Thank you, everyone, for a great year!

Meeting in December 2024

December 4th:

11:30 am: Punch

Noon Luncheon: Stuffed Chicken Breast or Salisbury Steak

Roasted Seasoned Redskin Potatoes with Vegetables

French Rolls w/Butter

Lemon Raspberry Cheesecake

Coffee



1:00 pm Program: Milwaukee High School of the Arts Choir, Raymond Roberts, Director

December 11th: 8:50 am Leave Franklin Fireside Coach Trip "Miracle on 34th Street"

9:30 am Leave First Church

Call the church office if you want to be placed on a waiting list.

You will receive your new program schedule for 2025 at the 1st meeting on Wednesday, January 15th, 2025. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Everyone!

FUMCWA LOCAL MISSIONS



We would like to extend our warmest Christmas greetings to the casserole makers and mission servants for your tremendous support throughout the year. As the winter months set in, the need for hot dishes has increased, and we need to count on your help for the Second Saturday Breakfast Program on December 14th. Please bring hot casseroles to the church kitchen by 7:45 am. We need more than 14 dishes to fulfill the growing hunger needs of our community. Thank you all for your support.

The **December Coins of Love** will support the Homeless population in West Allis. We are partnering with the West Allis Health Department Social Worker to provide essential items needed during the winter months.



October's Coins of Love - MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary \$528.74

November's Coins of Love - The Stars and Stripes Honor Flight of Wisconsin \$274.02



Wesleyan Congregational Care Team (WCCT) From Laura Molleson: December 21st is the first day of winter. Winter months can be difficult for so many who have lost loved ones or have feelings of being cut off from the world as bad weather hits. The purpose of the Wesleyan Congregation Care Team is to be available to support those in need either in person (weather permitting) or via phone. We can meet you in church, at your home, or anywhere you feel safe talking. Our visits can be one-time or ongoing. We do and always will care about every member of our church family. Please contact Pastor Grace, our church office, or Laura Molleson if you feel you'd like to be contacted by a member of our Care Team.

As with the change of the seasons, we often find things in the church's life that can change. Pastor Grace, Laurie Halvorsen, and I (Laura Molleson) have been in prayerful discussion about combining two ministries that closely complement each other. Our Wesleyan Congregational Care Team (WCCT) and the Visitation Ministry have both a similar mission and purpose. It makes sense that we consider blending these two ministries into one after the first of the year.

Both the Visitation Ministry and WCCT are here to serve our congregational family. We are always here for those present in church or any of our church family members currently unable to attend regularly. Both ministries are meant to be a support to everyone in need.



A Program of Prison Fellowship

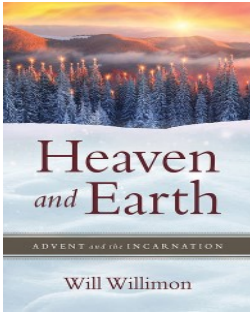
On November 24th, a Christmas tree was set up in the narthex decorated with paper angels. Each angel represents the gift wish of a child whose parent is incarcerated. You can select one or more angels from the tree, purchase the gift listed, wrap it, and **return it to our church no later than 10:30 am on Sunday, December 15th**. At the conclusion of the church service on December 15th, volunteers will be needed to deliver the gifts to the children's homes. It can be as simple as dropping off a package on your way home from church, and anyone can volunteer, regardless of whether you participated in the gift portion of this ministry. This year our church will serve approximately 30 children and their parents through the Angel Tree. It can be our way of introducing these families to the greatest gift of all: the love of Jesus Christ. If you have any questions or if you are interested in volunteering to deliver gifts, please call or text me at 703-888-7090.

In Christ's love, Pam Chesky Johnson

FUMCWA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult Christian Education Invitation From Bonnie Chesky: We read in the book of Hebrews 10:24 that we are responsible as faithful followers of Jesus Christ to encourage one another in "good deeds". Are you using your gifts and talents to serve Jesus and to encourage your neighbors, family, and friends? At the same time, are you personally growing in faith through reading the Bible and joining a class or small group study at church? Why not devote an hour a week to meeting with fellow members and dig into Scripture? You will be blessed!

Pastor Grace is leading an Advent study using a book by Will Willimon called "Heaven and Earth." It begins Sunday, December 1st, and runs for four Sundays. It will be offered as a Zoom class on Tuesday evenings. I know this study will bless you as you prepare your Heart for Christ's coming, which is our most important preparation, but is often neglected in the hustle and bustle of Advent.



Advent Study 2024: As we approach Christmas, the Advent season offers us a chance to rejoice in the promises we celebrate: the HOPE that Jesus will come back and bring about a new beginning, the JOY that comes from worshipping Him today and always, the PEACE we experience with God now and hope for our world to experience, and the LOVE of a God who gave up His own Son. We invite you to be a part of our Advent Book Study as we prepare our hearts for the arrival of Jesus.

Heaven and Earth: Advent and the Incarnation by William H. Willimon

In this four-week Advent study, William Willimon introduces us to the God who does just that: he brings heaven to earth and changes everything. In Advent, we celebrate and anticipate the earth-shaking, life-transforming good news that God is coming to us. Watch out. Get ready. God is on the way. We can't make a fresh start on our own. For a different future, we need a gift, not of our making. We need a God who isn't confined by eternity, who cares about us and is willing to be present and take action with us, here and now. This study includes a video component.

In-Person Study Begins Sunday, December 1st, 9:00-10:00 am Lighthouse Room

Leader: Pastor Grace

The class runs from **December 1st - December 22nd**. Books will be available for sale in the church office.

Zoom Study Begins Tuesday, November 26th, 7:00-8:00 pm

Leader: Tom Bolton

The Zoom class will be held on **November 26th, December 3rd, December 10th, and December 17th**. Please contact the church office to register. Books will be available for sale in the church office.

FUMCWA EVENTS

Lance Lambert / Events Coordinator:

Brunch in Bethlehem - Sunday, December 1st: What a wonderful way to kick off the Advent season! Following worship, make your way to Fellowship Hall and enjoy a great brunch followed by a reminder of the Nativity Story as presented by the kids. This unrehearsed portrayal of the story of Christ's birth is usually quite "interesting" and fun. "Jesus is the Reason for the Season" so join us!

Cookie Sale - Sunday, December 8th: Details in other posts and around the church.

Methodist Movie Matinee / Discussion - Sunday, December 15th: Following worship we will screen "*The Man Who Invented Christmas*" in the sanctuary. Based on the inspiring true story of the magical journey that led to the creation of Ebenezer Scrooge (Christopher Plummer), Tiny Tim and other characters from "A Christmas Carol," this film is rated PG. Charles Dickens mixed real-life inspiration with his vivid imagination to create unforgettable characters and a timeless tale. Movie, popcorn and beverages are FREE. Stay for pizza & a brief discussion (free-will offering for pizzas).

Advent 2024: A time to prepare yourself and your family for the birth of Christ.

Christmas Eve Services - December 24th: Plan to attend one of our special services at 4:30 pm or 7:30 pm.



FUMCWA FAITH COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recycle Socks and Raise Funds for Northcott Neighborhood House Update: Thanks to your efforts in sorting through sock drawers, we sent two boxes of socks to be recycled. Gildan generously covered the shipping costs, and the recycler contributed \$25.00 to Northcott Neighborhood House. We appreciate everyone who donated holey or unmatched socks! We are continuing to collect holey socks for a spring shipment. Please help us spread the word to your neighbors and co-workers, encouraging them to clean out their sock drawers and upcycle their old socks. The funds raised will support local employment training programs at the Methodist Church. Thank you!

Thanksgiving Thanks: We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who helped with the Thanksgiving Food Basket Ministry. Thank you for your monetary donations to the Coins of Love in September or for taking an envelope from the lollipop tree to fund a basket. We are so grateful for your prayers and continued support as we help our neighbors in need again. Together, we made a difference for 135 families. Many thanks to all who helped with food pickup, unloading, box opening, packing bags, distributing food, and traffic control. A lot of people working together make this ministry happen. By the time the baskets reach their destination, they are not only filled with food but with a big helping of kindness and care. We are rewarded by thoughtful handwritten cards of thanks and by seeing the joy and gratitude on the people's faces as they receive their Thanksgiving Baskets. Thanks be to God!



From Stewardship Chair Joe Pitterle: I am so proud of our church and its generosity. As Pastor Grace, Reverend Mahnke, and Peter Lambert have shared over the past month, Stewardship is much more than just a financial gift. As Reverend Mahnke said, "God has given us so much, in fact, that we have enough to give generously in love for others." Pastor Grace had the congregation share all the ways we already participate in Stewardship, through each of our current "Time, Treasure, and Talents." Seeing the whole church come up to the Gratitude Tree and add a cloud showing that each of us is already giving! I don't know about you, but I had difficulty fitting everything into my cloud! What a blessing we have in our church, already built deep into the DNA of our congregation. I'd like to thank each and every one of you for being a part of this journey, as it takes all of us together to make this work in harmony. As we look forward, we would continue to ask each of you, to think about Stewardship throughout the year, not just during the Stewardship campaign, not only what you have been doing, but if there are additional acts of time, treasure, or talent that you can share in 2025. I'd also ask each of you if there are those outside of the church that you feel would LOVE to be a part of our church. We all know how special First United Methodist Church of West Allis is, but let's make sure everyone around us also knows too. Our Christmas services are the best around, with so many talents being shared to warm our hearts and souls. More than ever, people are searching for something, but maybe are not sure what it is. We know they can find a connection here to God, to our church, and to all of us! God Bless! We would like to express our gratitude to all the members and friends of FUMCWA who returned their pledge cards indicating their commitment to the ministries and mission of the church on Stewardship Sunday. If you haven't returned your pledge card and you wish to contribute to the life of the church, please mail your pledge card to the church office.

Scholarship and Endowment Committee Report: This year, the Scholarship and Endowment committee was pleased to continue our mission of helping students who are continuing their education and caring for our church. We were excited to award five \$2,000 scholarships to our members who are continuing their education and five \$1,000 scholarships to deserving students in need at the local West Allis schools. Once again, we were happy to support our church's Vacation Bible School. Lastly, taking care of our church is important and something that we all benefit from. This year, we supported maintenance provided for the pipe organ, the elevator, the hearing devices, and the sanctuary sound system. The Scholarship and Endowment Committee is blessed to have an exceptional group of ladies who will be continuing on in 2025! A special thank you to our members: Carole Schumm, Linda Sather, Joanna Schachtely, Jane Henderson, Michelle Fuller, Becky Barrington, and Karen Pitterle.

