

DECEMBER
2024

The Current



Monthly News from Port Edwards United Methodist Church



At least the first two services will be live streams on YouTube.

Family Service – 4:00p

This “early” option will be a shorter, less formal service, geared for families with smaller children. The children will be invited to come forward, dress up, and help act out parts of the Christmas Story. Traditional Christmas carols will be peppered throughout this service, concluding with candlelight in the darkened sanctuary.

Please note that this early service is **not** a duplicate of the later services. It will not *necessarily* feel as formal as some are accustomed. In fact, depending on the number of children, it may be even divinely chaotic!

**This service has all worship assistants filled!*

Traditional Candlelight Service – 7:00p

This service follows our tradition of Lessons-and-Carols. Each part of the Christmas Story will be followed by singing some of our favorite carols. The service will conclude with candlelight in the darkened sanctuary.

**This service requires the most volunteers, esp. scripture readers. If you are planning to attend this service, PLEASE consider signing up to read one of the passages. The scripture readings (in large print) can be found near the clipboards in the church lobby.*

Intimate Midnight Mass Service – 11:00p

This service will take place up in the chancel near the big trees and high altar. We expect smaller attendance at this service, so it will be intentionally intimate and solemn. A shortened version of the Lessons-and-Carols will be followed by a service of

Holy Communion (all in attendance are welcome to partake).

**This service still has some open volunteer spots. If you are planning to attend this service, you may also consider signing up to be greeter or liturgist.*



HANGING OF THE GREENS (11/30): Mike & Adam H. set up the outdoor nativity scene; Lindsey & Lori H. helped them set up the two large trees; Lisa M. decorated each window; Bill & Jody P., Diane & John S., Kathy Mc., Julie B., Pastor Caleb, and Becky & Jeff T. helped to run the lights, adorn the trees, string the garland (Parks), hang the wreaths (Taylors), and all the other bits that were necessary to complete our holiday decorating, all while enjoying some classic holiday music! Thank you for all your help!



God's Bow of Promise

Tuesday, November 5th ended with a magnificently bright sunset, illuminating a double rainbow that just would not go away!

Pastor Caleb took this photo almost in the exact same spot a previous photo was taken about 2 years ago of a similar rainbow framing the church!

**All the time . . . God is good!
Praise Jesus!**

LETTERS TO THE VETERANS

We reached our goal of writing 100 cards to the veterans by Veterans' Day!

On Wednesday, November 13th, all 100 cards were hand-delivered to an organizer of the NEVER FORGOTTEN HONOR FLIGHT in Wausau (Richard Jarvis). He was so appreciative of our mission project and assured us that they will be delivered during their next honor flight in April 2025.

Thank you to all who signed a card or a handful. There will be 100 veterans so happy to receive a card from their unknown "friends at Port Edwards United Methodist Church."



THANKSGIVING IN GALENA

Thanksgiving usually finds Pastors Caleb and Doug in Southern Indiana (Evansville) for Thanksgiving with Pastor Caleb's mom's side of the family. But since his sister, Meghan, decided to go to Disney World for the week, it was decided that his mom & dad should come north. Historic Galena, Illinois was chosen. They stayed in an 1850's hotel downtown and enjoyed the fall & Christmas decorations, the historic homes, all the quaint storefronts along main street, and some really great food!

Beautiful Sanctuary!

Our "green-hangers" outdone themselves another year! It took many hands over several days to get the pieces together to usher in the Advent-Christmas season!

The "Packing of the Greens" will take place on after the worship service on Sunday, January 12th.



Holiday Joy in Children's Church!

On Sunday, December 8th, Lori H. led the children of the church through some fun holiday activities during *Children's Church. During the hour, they made cards for the shut-ins, decorated cookies, and made several Christmas ornaments. It was a fun and productive day for them!



Pictured: Gabe & Sawyer, Symphonie, and Gracie.

***The title "Children's Church" has been chosen to refer to what we have traditionally been calling "Sunday School." Don't be confused by the name change; it still refers to the same experience the children have while in the down in the classroom during the worship service!**

W.H.A.T.'S U.P. W.I.T.H. L.A.S.T. N.A.M.E.S.?

You have noticed that we are not listing the last names of individuals in our bulletins or newsletters (especially when coupled with photos). This is to protect their personal identities. Since our newsletters and bulletins are being posted online, it's an important practice not to make it too easy for scammers to use the information we include in our articles. While it might sometimes cause frustration when trying to discern details of prayer requests it is still an important safety practice. If you are praying for "Jenny D.," it's okay if you do not know who she is; God does.

NOTE: Sharing names at prayer time during our services also needs some careful attention. In a similar vein, when sharing prayer requests (verbally or written) it's also important to limit the use of last names. This is because our services are being live streamed on the internet. In these cases, it's not primarily about identity theft but about assuming other's preferred anonymity. The best rule of thumb: use your best judgment and ask permission first.

Do you surmise that the individual would appreciate prayer, or would they be uncomfortable knowing their personal concerns are being publicly shared?

Church Directory 2025

We are preparing for the next release of our church directory in January. Please help us with your contact information; don't forget to check on the accuracy of your other family members.

NEW for 2025: In January, we will be issuing a simple, stapled copy of our directory. Our next proper spiral-bound directory will come out in September of 2025, and will from this time onward be released annually in September, to align with the school year.

Honorary Members: In previous directories, we included name and contact information of members and friends of the church who had moved away. If you

know of a former member who is still emotionally and spiritually connected with our congregation, you ask them to include their names in our directory again.

What about our photos? Earlier this year, Pat M. took photos of individuals and couples of the congregation. We are considering doing a special anniversary-edition historical-pictorial directory to be released sometime next year through Shutterfly. This would be a pay-for-your-own-copy. Included would be the history of the congregation, historic photos of the church, and the photos of you taken this year.

REACHING OUT TO ADULT CHILDREN

by Pastor Caleb



Sometimes it is difficult for us to make that mental and emotional transition from thinking of our children as **dependent minors** to **independent adults**. Occasionally, the church must carefully navigate these murky waters. Parents of children who are now adults sometimes wish to retain control over their children's church membership and direct how the church should communicate with them.

We want our members to know that the administrative assistant and I have made it our official policy to consider each confirmed member and constituent (even minors) as **full** and responsible members. Of course, it's quite common for college-age students to still be living at home (particularly over the summer months) and many are still financially-dependent. But we have discerned the great need to relate to our young adult church members as the spiritually-independent adults that they are, and also to our underage members as the full church members they have been confirmed into.

We know that the 13-year-old who has just been confirmed by the church is still **dependent** upon their parents. But they should also be treated as **independently** responsible to their own faith life and should make faith-based decisions on their own.

"Head of Household," in our context, does not mean that they live alone or have their own family. It represents their *spiritual* independence and personal responsibility for *their* relationship with the church, which is separate from their physical or financial independence. A child temporarily living at their parents' home, or living there while paying rent, for instance, would qualify as being the "head" of their own "household." For our purposes, "household" does not have to refer to a *separate* residence. Again, we're not trying to describe a legal definition, just a way to organize the kind of relationships our members need to have with their church family.

Once in a while, a parent will want their adult children's church correspondence to be redirect to the parents' address (perhaps they assume their children are bad at opening mail and this is a way to help them – or perhaps they want to make membership status decisions on their behalf). For whatever reason, we feel it is important for us to refrain from communicating to adult children *through the parents*. This does not help them to relate to their church family as the fully responsible adult member of the church that they are but holds them back as second-class members still under their parents' authority.

It is a journey for all of us to mature spiritually (and to see our children do the same) and to claim the faith for *ourselves* and not just because "mom and dad told me so."

It's a hard transition for many parents. We imbue our membership status with a sense of sentimentality, and we hope to see our children's membership remain where *we* are – perhaps, where they were baptized and confirmed. But – as a faith community, we want *all* our members, especially if they had to move away, to be active in a church *near them* where they can participate fully in the life of that congregation.

In fact, as a good policy, we want to attempt to communicate even to our underaged members (confirmed but not yet 18 y.o.) as church members fully responsible for their own faith and relationship with the church. One church I know has the wise practice of helping teenage confirmands understand the concept of tithing to the church; they understand, of course, that a teenager does not have a regular income (or a minimal one at best). But it is a way for them to teach confirmands early about what it means to take full responsibility as mature church members – *the very purpose of Confirmation!*

The church has often goofed up when it, being sensitive to the special circumstances of members who are students, only begins mailing pledge cards and other correspondences to young adults until they've settled down after college. By the time they turn 25 and begin to first receive formal correspondence just to them from the church, they are suddenly struggling with the concept of membership responsibility which they had never been trained to discern. And, most likely, in the meantime, they have lost connection to their roots.

Thank you for understanding!

What is Our COMMUNITY HARDSHIP FUND Used for?

The **Community Hardship Fund** is a discretionary fund used by the pastor to help those in the local community with financial assistance. Most of the time, this fund is utilized when individuals approach the church; in these cases, they are often people traveling through town; a few are local residents (we serve the whole Rapids area).

The fund is also used to reach out to individuals and families in the area who are going through tough times. *(Members of the church also have access to this fund, when needed.)*

Below are just some examples of how the fund has been used these past few years:

Holiday travelers needed gas (Shell Station in Rapids)	\$14.30
A woman in Rapids had an illegally-loud muffler that needed to be fixed (order by police)	\$153.20
A dad from Rapids needed gas to go looking for a job (Quik Trip)	\$30.01
Donation to a local family struggling after a youth suicide (Port Edwards)	\$200.00
Family with a U-Haul traveling to Appleton needed gas money (BP)	\$105.04
A homeless man living in a vehicle needed money and food (Quik Trip)	\$99.21
A man between jobs needed groceries for the week (Pick-N-Save)	\$137.52
A family from Nekoosa needed food for the week (Dollar General)	\$208.04
A transient needed a meal and a hotel room (Arby's; Posh Inn)	\$128.05
Gift card (Walmart) given to dad & daughter who lost their home in a house fire in Saratoga (12/13/24)	\$300.00

In each case, no cash was given directly to the individuals. Vehicles were filled and groceries were purchased by the pastor. We want to be responsible stewards of *your* generosity!

When these disbursements are issued, they are not on behalf of the pastor alone; they are given on behalf of the

entire congregation who has faithfully funded this ministry. When you give to this fund, you are helping the church extend care beyond its walls to help those in need!

***NOTE: Currently, our first Sunday communion offering is NOT funding the Community Hardship, BUT you can still earmark any envelope or check for this ministry.*

What is Our CONGREGATIONAL CARE FUND Used for?

The Congregational Care Fund was started in June of this year. Our Communion offerings help to support this ministry.

Books on grief for the MemoryShare group	\$147.59
2024 Appreciation gifts to our volunteers	cost TBD

Congregational Care, unlike the Community Hardship, helps the church extend tangible signs of care to *our own members*. The list above is fairly short right now, but we will absolutely continue finding ways to use this source for items such as blankets, crosses, prayer shawls, flowers, meals, greeting cards and stamps, and other ways we can help support our members.

***NOTE: you can continue to give to either the Community Hardship or Congregational Care funds simply by marking your donations appropriately; at this time, all undesignated loose offerings currently go to support congregational care; we continue to monitor both funds and their amounts.*

Year-End Giving

DID THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY CHANGE MY GIVING RATE WHEN I TURNED IN MY PLEDGE CARD? No. Submitting your pledge card ("Estimate of Giving") did not authorize our financial secretary to adjust your giving amount or frequency. You must make that change yourself OR notify Bill P. directly about this. You can do this yourself by logging in to your giving portal at VANCO.com (through our church website). Pledge cards are only used for budgeting purposes.

WHAT IS THE LAST DATE TO GIVE ELECTRONICALLY ON V.A.N.C.O. FOR 2024? Friday, December 27th at midnight.

These will be attributed to the final Sunday of the year: 12/29.

WHAT IS THE FIRST DATE TO GIVE ELECTRONICALLY ON V.A.N.C.O. FOR 2025? Monday, December 30th.

Starting on Monday, these donations will be attributed to the first Sunday of next year: 1/5.

December Mission Project



FILL UP 3 HOLIDAY BASKETS

Basket #1: for a widower in his 80s

Basket #2: for a widower in his 80s

Basket #4: for a widow in her 90s

Deadline: Sunday, December 22nd

(All mission money given in December will go toward items in the baskets)



Previous project:

Collect sweatpants and sweatshirts for the (soon-not-to-be-named) Riverview Hospital's Caring Closet.

Clothing must be brand new with tags. They recommended oversize clothing in order to fit over casts and bandages.

The hospital uses these to give to patients leaving their facilities without proper winter clothing.

This project will be completed on Sunday, December 22nd.

January-February Mission Project

COLLECT MONEY TO SUPPORT RMN

The **Reconciling Ministries Network** (RMN) is the official-unofficial "gay caucus" of The United Methodist Church; it seeks the full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities throughout the denomination.

It was founded in 1983 as a system for congregations to publicly support LGBTQ+ persons and welcome them to full participation in the life of the church. The group was called "Reconciling Congregations" in reference to the need for reconciliation between gay people and the church.

In 1986, the first annual conferences to publicly endorse RMN were the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Conferences! Because of previous prohibitions, RMN was barred from functioning *within* the denomination and its structure. Therefore, it does not receive any official denominational funding; it is funded purely by private donations. RMN maintains a small staff within Chicago Temple UMC near Daley Plaza.

***As a Reconciling Congregation, we are a member of RMN and are encouraged to give annually to support their budget. We have yet to establish our commitment in this way; HOWEVER, we hope to help them through this project.*

Second Project in February. We might do a mission project involving chocolates and cookies around St. Valentine's Day OR something for Superbowl Sunday. More info. to come!



PEUMC.OFFICE@GMAIL.COM WILL BE NO LONGER

If your computer automatically saves email addresses in your contact lists, please make sure to update our office email, or write it down wherever you keep your notes.

Since April, we have been email-forwarding from our old gmail.com address to our new OFFICE@PEUMC.ORG, but we are ending our former email at the end of this year.

LOBBY CARPET FUNDRAISER IS COMPLETED!

Thank you for your generosity to our carpet square fundraiser! \$6,027, the total, has been raised by members of the congregation! Freedom Carpet will be installing the carpet in late January. There are 23 samples of carpet styles to choose from. This Sunday (12/15) is the only chance to help choose the color.

The areas that will receive new carpet are the entryway (a.k.a, lobby or foyer), the vestibule (outside the sanctuary doors), and the Tower Room (a.k.a, the old main entry).

Thank you from Wis. Rapids Family Center

Dear Port Edwards United Methodist Church,

On behalf of Wisconsin Rapids Family Center, I would like to thank you for your generous donation of **\$200.00** received on 12/2/2024 as part of our Annual Appeal Campaign. Your contribution makes it possible for us to continue to serve people victimized by abuse.

Since its inception in 1983, Wisconsin Rapids Family Center has worked to eliminate violence and provide support and safety for individuals and families impacted by domestic abuse and sexual assault, in all its forms. We are able to accomplish this because of contributions from people like you.

Thank you for believing in the work we do.

Sincerely,

Tricia Fancher



Thank You from New Beginnings for Refugees

Dear Port Edwards United Methodist Church,

Thank you for your recent gift to the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin in support of the **New Beginnings Refugee Service Fund (Wausau, WI)**! These projects help to fulfill our mission to enhance the equality of life in our region.

We applaud your philanthropic spirit and deeply appreciate your investment to your community.

Warm Regards,



Tim Parker
President/CEO



Please retain this receipt for your income tax records.
Donation Date: **11/26/2024**
Amount: **\$580.00**
Fund: **New Beginnings Refugee Services Fund**

Connection Packet – Submit ASAP!

By now, every member of the congregation should have received a **yellow** packet titled **CONNECTION PACKET**. This is a very important piece to our new leadership structure, and it *does* require some prayer and reflection.

The packet is to help us determine where the abilities and interest lay within our congregation. This packet is important because we are removing all our administrative

committees. Instead of standing committees meeting regularly (and often wearing people out in the process) we are opting to reach out more to the wider congregation with short-term projects and requests.

By January 1st, we will produce our first draft of all the connection lists. This will be our first chance to see how well we have filled the calling lists from the packets that have been returned.

If you do not want to fill out the paper form, you can always fill out the same form electronically straight from our church website. Go to **peumc.org/connection**. The form will be submitted directly to our church office email.

Connie in the office has received many packets so far and is compiling the lists as they come in!

Thank you to all who have prayerfully filled out the packets and submitted them!

Christmas Caroling – Monday, December 23rd

We are scheduled to sing carols at **Edgewater Haven** at **10:30a** on **Monday, December 23rd**.

We will sing for 30-40 minutes.

Songbooks will be available.

~~After that, we will go down and sing carols at Nekoosa Courts at 11:40a. You are invited to have lunch at West River Café in Nekoosa afterwards. (TBD).~~

Blue Christmas Service

The Greater Rapids Area Churches for Ecumenism (G.R.A.C.E.) is continuing its practice of putting on a community Blue Christmas service.

Thursday, December 19th

6:00 PM

hosted at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church

(320 Oak Street, Wisconsin Rapids – across from the Post Office)

Blue Christmas (also called 'the Longest Night') is a tradition that marks the longest night of the year, the Winter Solstice. Around this date (12/21 to be exact), churches hold services that honor people who have lost loved

ones, are experiencing grief, or are just not getting into the holiday spirit. Services often include opportunities for expression of grief, pain, and heartbreak as well as an opportunity to focus on the promise of hope found in Christ.

Church Newsletter for 2025 – Sign Up For Your Copy

If you didn't know . . . we have a monthly church newsletter!!!! If you've never seen it before . . . then look at the packet of papers currently in your hands: Our newsletter looks almost exactly like this! 😊

There are 4 ways to view our monthly newsletter:

- (1) You can pick up a copy in the lobby of the church,
- (2) you can view it thru our weekly MailChimp email,
- (3) you can view it on our website, or
- (4) you can have it mailed directly to your house.

Some have previously received their newsletter by mail but are no longer. We needed to condense the mailing list because it was costing the church over \$20

a month to mail them out. Now, only shut-ins and those who live at a distance from the church receive the newsletters by mail. If someone has the ability to pick theirs up at the church within a couple of weeks, they no longer receive it by mail.

Additionally, starting with our January newsletter, we want each person to sign up specifically for their own hard copy. By doing this, we know exactly how many copies to print. Your copy will still be free but it will now be labeled with your name on it. You will be able to pick up your copy from the welcome table in the church lobby.

DETROIT 2025

MOTOWN MISSION



We are invited to join the Suamico (WI) United Methodist congregation on a mission trip to Detroit, Michigan!

Bus leaves Suamico UMC 7:00am **Sunday, June 22nd** & returns 5:00pm on **Saturday, June 28th**. The cost is **\$650** a person (\$600 for 40 or more people; \$550 for 50 or more people).

Cost includes transportation, insurance, lodging, and meals.

(\$100 down payment upon registration; checks made out to Suamico United Methodist Church; 3266 Lakeview drive, PO Box 323, Suamico, WI 54173)

MOTOWN MISSION organizes daily work crews to help with economic disaster recovery: greening, feeding, and rebuilding. This includes social service projects, providing meals, and rebuilding homes. We will be staying at one of the historic Detroit United Methodist Churches. Lodging includes beds and shower/restroom facilities. While we are there, we will learn about Detroit history and culture and visit the Motown Music Museum.

We will be taking a coach bus across the U.P. and across the Mackinaw bridge.

Youth, young adults, and adults are welcome! (Grades 7 and up)

Pre-trip meeting attendance (in-person or ZOOM) is required. The group will get to know each other and prepare spiritually for the trip. There will be daily devotions and evening worship every day during the trip, and one cultural evening for the entire group. The trip is insured through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.

The trip leader is Rev. Anna-Lisa Hunter (wife of our district superintendent)

Reservations/Questions: pastor@suamicoumc.org

Children's Church Dates:

(Sunday School)

January – no C.C.

Sunday, February 9th

(Becky T.)

Sunday, March 9th

Sunday, April 13th

Sunday, May 11th

FIRST WEDNESDAY

Hymn-sing service on the first Wednesday of each month.

Wednesday, January 1st – 6:00 – 7:00 PM – JESUS' BIRTH

Wednesday, February 5th – 6:00 – 7:00 PM – JESUS' LIFE

Memorial Lounge

We sing through lots of hymns—learn a few new ones, sing lots of favorite classics!

The message is in the lyrics! *(Not livestreamed.)*

THANK YOU, 2024 WORSHIP ASSISTANTS!

Marge & Randy B., Bob & Julie B., Jeanne B., Ken & Sue B., Colby G., Tiara G., Art & Carol Ann H., Midge H., Ella, Eliza, and Gabe H., Mike & Lori H., Maribeth L-C., Sandy L., Ellen & Skip M., Kathy & Pat, Judy M., Lisa M., Kathleen M., Sue M., Candy P-T., Norm S., Sharon S., Diane & John S., Leona S., Becky T., Sara T., Leo & Sue T., and Rose W.

That is THIRTY-EIGHT helpers in a congregation that averages less than that on a Sunday morning!

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers!

A special sign of appreciation to our dedicated musicians:

Sue M.!



Judy M.!



Ellen M.!



Thank you for serving our church and enhancing our services through your gift of music!

AN ENORMOUS ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THE MINISTRY PROVIDED BY Colby G., our media technician!



Most of us cannot see him behind the wall but he is truly the great and powerful wizard and the "man behind the screen" who makes it possible for our services to be aired live on YouTube!

Thank you so much!

WE HAVE THREE OTHER STAFF MEMBERS WHO DESERVE ALL THE GRATITUDE WE CAN OFFER:

Kari B.: Thank you for keeping our facilities clean and accessible!

Connie C.: Thank you for maintaining the nerve-center of our church's daily life!

Jeff T.: Thank you for caring for our building and the grounds,
and battling every maintenance issue that comes your way with grace & wisdom!

OUR OUTGOING LEADERS

We have many church leaders who are bidding *adieu* to their positions on December 31st. Some of our leaders have reached their term limits, others are desiring a break, and some are taking part in the transition into the new leadership model we are engaging in starting January 1st.

I, Pastor Caleb, speak on behalf of the whole congregation, and from the bottommost part of my heart, when I say, "THANK YOU!" to our outgoing leaders who have steered our ship for so long, helped me in countless ways, and now receive their long-awaited, long-overdue, and long-deserved rest.

To **BOB B.** for being our Lay Leader for many, many years!

To **SKIP M.** for being our Church Council chair and coordinator of our Worship ministries!

To **BECKY T.** for being our treasurer and handling our vouchers and remitting our mission projects!

To **KATHY MC.** for being our vice chair of Nominations,
while also overseeing our chancel flowers and nursery!

To **SUE T.** for being our chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee across, at least,
5 pastoral appointments!

To **JOHN S.** for overseeing our Endowment Fund (as well as our Elevator Committee)!

To **LUANN S., ART H., MIDGE H., KATHY MC.,** and **BOB B.** for serving on the
Staff-Parish Relations Committee and caring for the pastors of this congregation!

To **MARY & ED H.,** and **CAROL ANN H.** for serving so diligently on the Nominations Committee!

To all the members of the Vision Team who have helped Pastors Dave and Caleb cast a vision
and find our core values: **BOB B., TIFFANY H., ELLEN M., BECKY T., SUE T.,** and **BILL L.!**

To **KALI M.** for overseeing our Children and Youth Ministries!

To **LINDSEY H.** for keeping our Witness Ministries so active!

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS!

GATHERINGS FOR DECEMBER:

MemoryShare –

Tuesday, December 3rd @ 10:30a – El Café

Tuesday, January 7th @ 10:30a – El Café

Men's Breakfast –

Saturday, December 7th – 8:00a – El Café

Saturday, January 4th – 8:00a – El Café

First Wednesday Hymn Service

Wednesday, December 4th – 6:00p

(cancelled due to poor weather)

Church Council –

Sunday, Dec. 8th – 11:30a – Memorial Lounge

UWIF Christmas Tea –

Thur., Dec. 5th – noon, in the Fellowship Hall

Circle of Friends –

Wed., Dec. 11th – 1:00p – Fellowship Hall

Church Conference

Sat., Dec. 14th – 11:00a to noon

Perkins Restaurant – Wis. Rapid

Leadership Council 2025



A **vice chair** shall be chosen from within the Council membership; the **secretary** may rotate amongst the members; the lay member(s) to annual conference and financial officers may act as **alternates** in case of absences.

Class of 2027 (3 years)	Class of 2026 (2 years)	Class of 2025 (last year)
Nina Pelo	Lindsey Hintz	Helmuth Wrege
Chuck Lamb	Sue Mitchell	Joy Rogoski

<i>Chair & Lay Leader:</i> Leo Thomasgard Pastor Caleb	<i>Lay Member to An. Conference:</i> Diane Sweat <i>Lay Member to An. Conf. (alternate):</i> John Sweat
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Discipleship Committee 2025

(Nominations + Member Engagement)



Class of 2027 (3 years)	Class of 2026 (2 years)	Class of 2025 (last year)
Jerry Klahn	Maribeth Lacasse-Salo	Sue Thomasgard
Leona Sweat	Becky Taylor	Bob Berg

Chair: Pastor Caleb

Financial Management 2025



(3) = 3 years left / (2) = 2 years left / (1) = last year

Financial Officer + Endowment		Financial Secretary	
Bill Lindroth (3)		Bill Parks (1)	
Stewardship		Assistant Financial Secretary	
Sue Mitchell (2)		Administrative Assistant (Connie Cross)	
Treasurer	Gallery Chair	Wills & Memorials	
Tiara Grunden (3)	Bob Berg (1)	Lisa Miller (2)	

G.R.A.C.E.



The Greater Rapids Area Churches for Ecumenism

G.R.A.C.E. met Wednesday, December 4th @ noon @ Port Edwards United Methodist Church.

Attendance: BobbieJoy A. & Patricia G. (St. John's Episcopal); Rev. Caleb M. (Port Edwards UMC – treasurer); Rev. Michelle N. (Grace Lutheran, ELCA – secretary); Rev. Kate W. (First UCC, Wis. Rapids). Rev. Margo P. (Woodland Lutheran, ELCA – Rome – V.P.); Rev. Beth R. (Moravian, Wis. Rapids – President);

THANKSGIVING SERVICE (REVIEW): Sunday, November 24th. Attendance lower than previous year; Packer's game going on at the same time. Service went well; most stayed for pie; and we raised **\$150.00** for our meal debt relief fund for students in the Rapids area.

FINANCES: Pastor Caleb gave the financial report. We have raised **\$2,604.50** for school meal debt relief so far and we have **\$113.35** in club funds.

COMMUNITY BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE: **Thursday, December 19th at 6:00p** at St John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in downtown Rapids. Participants will be: Pastors Beth, Caleb, Michelle, David, and Kate. The service will be Taizé style with a contemplative and meditative feel.

PULPIT EXCHANGE: We cannot do January 19th – too many scheduling conflicts. Rescheduled for **Sunday, February 9th**. Pastors Kate, Margo, Michelle, Caleb, Beth, and David will participate. In January, we will pick names out of a hat to see which pastor will preach at which church.

TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER FOR SCHOOL MEAL DEBT: **Sunday, February 23rd from 2:00-4:00p** at Two Doors Down Brewery/B's Taphouse. Bar and kitchen will be open and serving their typical Sunday menu. We will have silent auction baskets. Since we have membership with the Chamber of Commerce, we will have C.C. reach out to member businesses about donating basket items. No entry fee for playing.

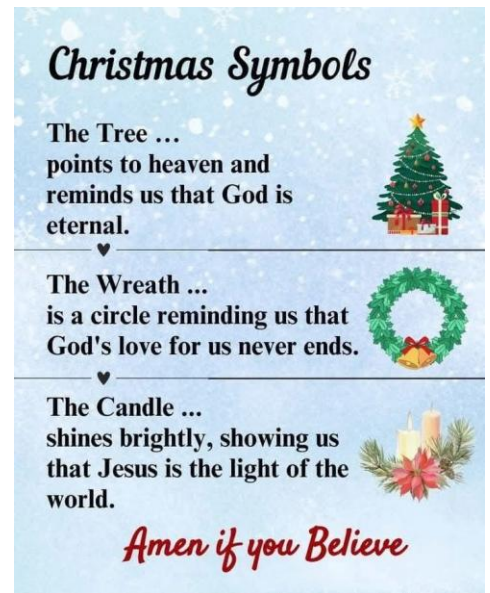
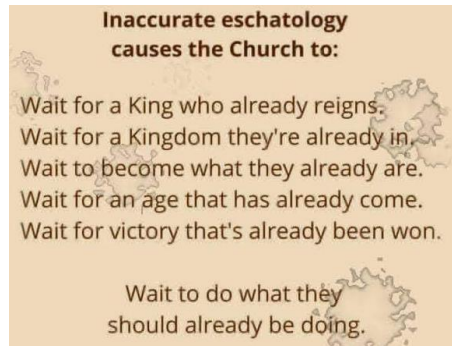
LENT ROUND ROBIN: We are thinking about a lunchtime study for the middle five Wednesdays in Lent (12:15 – 12:45). Bring your own lunch. Possible location: the community theater in the Centralia Center.

LUNCH AND LEARN: Beth will contact Sheriff Becker at the Wood Co. sheriff department or Lonnie Selje to present at our next lunch-and-learn event.

COMMUNITY V.B.S.: First week in August.

NEXT MEETINGS: January 15th @ noon @ Woodland Lutheran Church.
We will continue to meet monthly on the third Wednesday at noon.

Respectfully submitted, Michelle N.



BE A REAL X-IAN AND CELEBRATE X-MAS!

In seminary, I took these classes: Early X-ian History, X-ian Worship, X-ian Education in the Parish, and X-ianity & World Religions. This was our way of taking shorthand notes.

Many have assumed that **Xmas** is part of a perceived “war of Christmas,” and that people are intentionally removing Christ from the season. But that is not usually the case . . . certainly not *historically*.

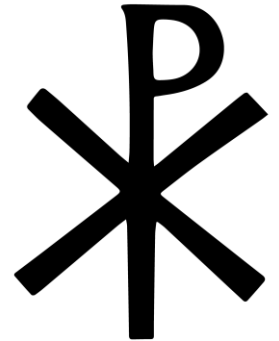
In Greek, the name “Christ” is *Christos*, which in the Greek alphabet would be **Χριστού**. The first letter, *Chi*, looks like the English letter X. In the early 4th century, Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor from 306-337, popularized this shorthand for Christ. According to legend, on the eve of his great battle against Maxentius, Constantine had a vision that led him to create a military banner emblazoned with the first two letters of Christ on it: *chi* and *rho*. These two letters, then, became a shorthand to say: Jesus Christ. (see image to the right)

The first appearance of this abbreviation for Christmas dates to 1021 when an Anglo-Saxon scribe saved himself space by writing “XPmas.” Parchment paper was quite expensive, so any techniques for saving space were welcome. The abbreviation stuck and eventually was shortened even more to Xmas.

Hating “X-mas” is somewhat misplaced; it has nothing to do with a misperceived cultural “war on Christmas.”

The real war on Christmas was waged in the 1700s by conservative American Christians who were wary of the pagan roots of the festivities, so Puritans wanted to keep *Christmas* out of their no-nonsense *Christianity*, banning the celebration altogether in the colonies for many decades!

So, use “Xmas” all you want as a shorthand when jotting down notes or where writing space is limited. But if you have the time, energy, and room, go ahead and write out the whole word if your message is really to “keep Christ in Christmas.”



HAPPY HOLIDAYS VS. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

When someone says, “**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**” instead of “**MERRY CHRISTMAS**,” remember that they are not doing it because of political correctness or engaging in a “war on Christmas.” They do it out of respect.

From the 20th of November to January 24th, there are at least 14 different religious holidays, most notably, *Hanukkah* and *Kwanzaa*. So, when someone says “Happy Holidays” to you, be kind and thank them back. They don't want to assume your religious background; they don't know what you believe in. They are trying to respect *you*.

If a Jewish person wishes you a “**Happy Hanukkah**” or someone of color wishes you a “**Joyous Kwanzaa**” then return their blessing and say, “**Thank you! To you, too!**”

WHAT IS HANNUKAH AND KWANZAA?

Hanukkah is a Jewish festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Second Temple at the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BCE (during the time between the Old & New testaments).

Hanukkah is observed for 8 nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, which may occur at any time from late November to late December.

The festival is observed each night by lighting the candles of a candelabrum with nine branches called a *menorah*. Other festivities include singing Hanukkah songs, playing the game of dreidel, and eating oil-based and dairy foods. This year, Hanukkah begins on Christmas Day and ends on January 2nd.



Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African-American culture from December 26th to January 1st. It was created by activist Maulana Karenga, based on African harvest festival traditions from various parts of Africa. Kwanzaa was first celebrated in 1966. It is estimated that over 3 million Americans, mostly African-Americans, celebrate Kwanzaa.

It is not an anti-religious holiday but, instead, a non-religious one that celebrates African ancestry. The founder’s goal was to “give black people an alternative to the existing holiday of Christmas and give black people an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their history, rather than simply imitate the practice of the dominate society.” “Kwanzaa” derives from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, meaning “first fruits,” referring to the harvest festivals that exist in southern Africa.

Kwanzaa was not created to give people a festival other than Christmas; many African Americans who celebrate Kwanzaa also observe Christmas.

Kwanzaa celebrates the 7 principles of African Heritage: (1) unity; (2) self-determination; (3) collective work and responsibility); (4) cooperative economics; (5) purpose; (6) creativity; and (7) faith.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS – 12/29 – 1/11

Below are daily scripture readings that are based on Sunday morning’s lectionary passages. While these passages will jump around the parts of the Bible, just remember that they have been chosen to align *thematically* with either the previous Sunday’s or upcoming Sunday’s Bible story.

**These will be printed weekly in our bulletins as well.*

Sun. 12/29	Luke 2:21-38	Baby Jesus in the Temple	Sun. 1/5	Luke 2:41-52	Boy Jesus in the Temple
12/30	John 1:14-18	The Flesh Lived Among Us	Epiphany	Matthew 2:1-12	The Visit of the Wise Men
NYE 12/31	Psalm 23	The Lord is My Shepherd	1/7	Exodus 13:1-2	Consecration of Firstborn
NYD 1/1	Jeremiah 23:1-4	Caring Shepherds	1/8	Leviticus 26:3-6	God Will Grant Peace
1/2	Genesis 17:9-14	Sign of the Covenant	1/9	Leviticus 26:7-13	The Covenant Revealed
1/3	Matthew 2:13-15	The Escape to Egypt	1/10	Malachi 4:4-6	Advice for the Coming of the Lord
1/4	Luke 2:39-40	The Return to Nazareth	1/11	Isaiah 62:10-12	Build Up a Highway

USING THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN

by Pastor Caleb

Back in November, I gave a sermon where I stated that it was okay “to get mad at God.” In the sermon, I said, something like, “*shake your fists, if you must; give God ‘the bird,’ shout out a well-chosen 4-letter word, if that’s what you feel you need.*” Nobody said anything about these words after the service, but as I was preaching this, it raised even *my* eyebrows, and I knew right then that this would deserve a small part in our next newsletter.

So this is me being self-aware.

As you may already well know, the paraphrase I just gave in the paragraph above is an example of “rhetoric.” Rhetoric means “the art of effective or persuasive speaking – speaking designed to have particular effect on its audience.” *Do I want people to get mad at God? It is an acceptable Christian practice to “flip” God off? And isn’t using God’s name in foul language against one of the commandments?*

Again, this is a good example of sermonic rhetoric. Without lying, I’m using exaggerated speech to drive home a point. The desired effect is to give people permission to release their anger; and to be okay, in the moment, to direct our feelings at God; this is not an abomination. The purpose is to teach that God doesn’t get so easily offended (not as easily as we can get)! God feels what we feel. And God is full of compassion. God’s feelings are not hurt simply because we’re frustrated and we take it out on God. God is bigger and tougher than that.

But . . . I want you to know that I’m not condoning the *habit* of cursing God or blaming God for our problems. Instead, I’m trying to help people handle their anger and concerns correctly. Remember in the Bible, Job blames God for his troubles but God does not condemn Job for this. Certainly, God sat Job down and gave him a real “talkin’ to,” but in the end, God was just happy that Job turned toward God in his anger; it’s a better option than turning *away* from God.

What good would I be if I, the preacher, tried to add guilt on top of our already heavy feelings?

When the third commandment says, “*Thou shall not use the Lord’s name in vain,*” (Exodus 20:7) we’ve been taught that this means not to curse at God, especially by saying “G**d***.”

But this is an inaccurate interpretation of this verse.

Several translations state it more accurately: “*Do not misuse the name of God,*” or “*Do not use the name of God lightly.*” In other words, the focus is not on the words we shout out impulsively when we hit our thumbs with our hammers (I’ve never done that before; ask your dad sometime). The intent of this commandment is how we can MISrepresent God in our testimonies: Lying about what God hates or condemns in order to get our way. When elected officials cite God in their proposed legislation, saying this is what God would want, when the nature of the new law is not at all of a Christian character, and they are only saying it to gain “Christian votes,” this is a breaking of the third commandment.

Should we refrain from using God’s name with using offensive 4- and 8-letter words? Absolutely. But this is *not* the central sin that the third commandment addressing

The real sin is using God’s name for our own benefit or attributing God to something that is not godly.

WINTER WEATHER

- our parking lot and sidewalks will be plowed and salted for our Sunday morning services.
- the drop-off area nearest the main entry will be de-iced, salted, and sanded as best we can.
- greeters are asked to look out for those arriving and who may be having difficult approaching the entry.

SERVICE CANCELLATION:

An official call to cancel services due to bad, snowy, icy conditions will be made by 8:30 AM on Sunday morning. We will use these means to notify you: MailChimp (email), PhoneVite (phone), and on the main page of our church website. PLEASE make sure you sign-up for one of these services.

December Household Prayers

Throughout this month, the congregation is asked to pray for the following families
(randomly chosen on 11/24):

- Jerry F.
- Ellen & Skip M.
- Lynn R.
- Barbara T.
- The Parks Family



**THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS, FOR
HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NOVEMBER!**



A program of Aspirus Riverview Hospital
made possible by United Way of
South Wood & Adams Counties

Home Delivered Meals Drivers

Julie Berg
Pat & Kathy McGrath
Sue Mitchell
Nina Pelo
Leo & Sue Thomasgard

Every four weeks, PEUMC volunteers deliver a hot and nutritious noon meal to homes of Wisconsin Rapids area residents who are unable to prepare their own meals. Anyone interested in helping with this program may contact Becky Taylor (715-887-2163) for more information. **THANK YOU!**

DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Service 10:00 AM <i>(Communion)</i>		10:30a MemoryShare El Café	First Wednesday Service 6:00-7:00p Fellowship Hall	UWIF Christmas Tea 12:00	Pastor's day off	8:00a Men's Breakfast at El Café Community Choir Concert 1 st Congregation at Church – Rapids 4:00p
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Service 10:00 AM 2 nd Sundy Refreshments Church Council Meeting 11:00a			Circle of Friends 1:00p		Pastor's day off Newsletter items due	Charge Conference 11:00-11:30a
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Service 10:00 AM				Community Blue Christmas Service – St John's Episcopal Church – 6pm	Pastor's day off	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Service 10:00 AM	Christmas Caroling at Edgewater Haven 10:30a-11:10a	Christmas Eve Services 4:00p 7:00p 11:00p	Christmas		Pastor's day off Electronic giving must be completed by this date.	
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Service 10:00 AM NEWBORN SAINTS SUNDAY	Electronic funds given this week are attributed to Jan. 5 th .	Birthday Pat A. New Year's Eve	Birthday Sharon S. New Year's Day			8:00a Men's Breakfast at El Café

Birthdays: Lucy S. (12/13), Sue B. (12/15), Leona S. (12/18),
Sue T. (12/21), Pat A. (12/31), Sharon S. (1/1)

Anniversaries: Art & Carol Ann H. (12/5), Terry & Marie H.
(60th – 12/26), Guy & Jo Ann D. (12/16), Peter & Joann K./
Mike & Kali M. (12/29), Pat & Kathy M. (12/30).

Church Office Hours:

Connie: Mon. thru Fri. : 8:00a – noon
Pastor: Mon. thru Thurs.: 9a – noon