



## CHRISTMAS TIME

This is a special time with so much happening! In addition to our regular Sunday worship gatherings, this time of Advent is a great time to start a devotional practice. We have devotionals available at the Welcome Center to take home. There is also an Advent devotional online with our bishop every Tuesday evening at 7 PM on Zoom. Please register at [www.iaumc.org/adventstudy](http://www.iaumc.org/adventstudy).

We have a fantastic Gingerbread House Decorating Party. This family fun Christmas activity is on Wednesday, December 13 from 6:30-7:30 PM for the first time in our new ministry center. You'll enjoy Christmas music, snacks, and the fun of decorating a pre-made gingerbread house. This is a great opportunity to invite friends and neighbors in our community! Please note that pre-registration is required and will close once all of the gingerbread houses have been reserved. Go to our website [waukeechurch.life](http://waukeechurch.life) and click the link to reserve your house! Free-will donation will be accepted to help offset the cost of the gingerbread houses. This is a great way to serve as we reach to the community. We need people to set up on December 12, serve at the event, and make holiday treats to enjoy. To sign up, check the Welcome Center or contact the church office.

Cocoa and Carols happens Sunday, December 17 in afternoon at 3 PM. We will meet at the church to go caroling, bringing joy to residents of local retirement communities. We will return to the church to enjoy some cocoa and fellowship. Those who participate are invited to bring a treat to share when we return. Cocoa will be provided.

Because the holidays can be difficult for many, we will share in a Blue Christmas worship service on Friday, December 22 at 7 PM. In the midst of the joy and excitement of the season there can be gloom and grief. The beginning of winter on December 21 brings the longest night of the calendar year, the longest period of darkness and an apt metaphor for how many feel. We will gather together to light candles, celebrate Holy Communion, and receive comfort in scripture and prayer. This is a beautiful moment of worship and fellowship, bringing Christ's light to our lives.

Finally, with the 12 day celebration of Jesus' birth upon us, we will gather on Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24 with services at 9:30 AM, 5 PM, and 10:30 PM. We have good news to share and celebrate! Please invite everyone you know to join us in this celebration of the birth of Jesus. The 9:30 AM celebration includes the choir's Christmas cantata. Then at 5 PM modern candlelight service we will enjoy Christmas carols with the band, candles, the story of Jesus' birth, and a special time for children. We'll add the celebration of Holy Communion at the 10:30 PM traditional candlelight service and walk outside just near midnight for the beginning of Christmas Day.

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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Christmas Eve Worship will be at 5:00 PM and 10:30 PM
- We have a lot of great events in December, so read carefully!
- There's a finance update on page 4

## CHRISTMAS IS NOT YOUR BIRTHDAY

Do you ever wish Christmas could mean something more? Even the Grinch says, “Maybe Christmas doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more.” We know this, right? But what does the way we live our lives reveal about what Christmas actually means to us?

Back in 2004, nearly twenty years ago, Mike Slaughter, the pastor of the Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Ohio, stood before the congregation and said, “I want you to have a slim Christmas this year...and whatever you spend on your family, bring an equal amount for hunger relief in the Sudan. Because Christmas is not your birthday; it’s Jesus’ birthday.”

That Christmas, their congregation brought a Christmas miracle offering of more than \$300,000. Since then, they’ve raised over \$5 million for The Sudan Project, their humanitarian program in Darfur, Sudan, by repeating that same message each year: “Christmas is not your birthday. It’s Jesus’ birthday.”

I wonder if this could inspire us toward a more Jesus-centered holiday that focuses not on all the material gifts we’ll give and receive, but on how we can bless others in Jesus’ name. We can all certainly do this in our lives this year. But in the coming years, could we proclaim, “Christmas is not your birthday. Celebrate your birthday when it is your birthday. Celebrate Jesus’ birthday on Christmas.” Shopping and spending money on stuff does not celebrate Jesus’ birthday. Jesus said he came to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18). Jesus did not come so some of the wealthiest people in the world (that is us) could have more stuff.

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*May our lives proclaim, “Happy Birthday, Jesus!”*

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Christmas is a wonderful time of year. There is wonder and beauty and music and light in the darkness. Still, it is not about consumption but compassion. It is not about presents but presence. It is a time to be generous. Therefore, I wonder if we could all choose to celebrate Jesus’ birth by giving to mission with our money (and our time and service, too!).

This could be hardest for those of us with younger children or grandchildren, but it is essential that we form our children as followers of Jesus. That doesn’t mean we can’t decorate or share presents or celebrate all the goodness of Christmas. It does mean we have to struggle constantly against the ways our children are formed in the world. This will not happen easily or quickly. Still, could we start giving an equal amount to mission, both with our money and our service? Even buying one less present, though, and giving the money to those in need is a good start. What might you and I do to live in such a way that our lives proclaim, “Happy Birthday, Jesus!”

Grace and peace to you,

John Louk



## DECEMBER CALENDAR

1	F	7:00 PM	Vox Concert
3	Su	8:30 AM	Sunday School
		9:30 AM	Sunday Worship
			Second Sunday in Advent
			Communion Sunday
4	M	1:00 PM	Staff Meeting
		6:00 PM	Capital Campaign Meeting
5	Tu	9:00 AM	Bible Read Through
6	W	5:30 PM	Bell Rehearsal
		6:30 PM	Choir Rehearsal
		6:45 PM	Youth Group
7	Th	7:00 PM	Band Rehearsal
		7:00 PM	Thursday Evening Women's Group
10	Su	8:30 AM	Sunday School
		9:30 AM	Sunday Worship
		6:00 PM	Confirmation
			Third Sunday in Advent
			Choir Singing
11	M	10:00 AM	Prayer Shawl
		4:00 PM	Trinity Meal
		6:00 PM	Capital Campaign Meeting
12	Tu	9:00 AM	Bible Read Through
		6:30 PM	Church Board
		6:30 PM	Gingerbread House Set Up
13	W	9:00 AM	UWF Meeting
		5:30 PM	JUMP
		5:30 PM	Bell Rehearsal
		6:00 PM	Youth Group
		6:30 PM	Choir Rehearsal
		6:30 PM	Gingerbread House Decorating
14	Th	7:00 PM	Band Rehearsal
17	Su	8:30 AM	Sunday School
		9:30 AM	Sunday Worship
		3:00 PM	Cocoa & Carols
			Bells Playing

## LIVESTREAMING

We are excited to begin livestreaming this December! You will still be able to join us online at 9:30 AM on Facebook and YouTube, but instead of a pre-recorded worship, you will be able to view our live worship each Sunday morning. The videos will still be available afterward as well, so you can watch it whenever you want.

Our first livestream will be **Sunday, December 10!**

If you'd like to help us livestream on Sundays, contact Mara Baumeister at [maralouk@waukeechurch.org](mailto:maralouk@waukeechurch.org)

18	M	1:00 PM	Staff Meeting
		6:00 PM	Capital Campaign Meeting
19	Tu	9:00 AM	Bible Read Through
20	W	6:30 PM	Choir Rehearsal
		6:45 PM	Youth Group
21	Th	11:30 AM	Lunch Bunch
		7:00 PM	Band Rehearsal
22	F	7:00 PM	Blue Christmas
24	Su	9:30 AM	Sunday Worship
		5:00 PM	Modern Candlelight Christmas Eve
		10:30 PM	Traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve
			Choir Singing
			Christmas Eve
25	M		Office Closed for Christmas
26	Tu		Office Closed for Christmas
27	W	6:30 PM	Choir Rehearsal
28	Th	7:00 PM	Band Rehearsal
31	Su	9:30 AM	Sunday Worship

## CELEBRATIONS

Ben Tope	1
Allison Flack	3
Breydan Mann	3
Nathan Wanned	4
Randy Lauer	5
Jill Davis	5
Keith Halverson	6
Zach Tope	8
Izzy Sparks	8
Allan Graham	10
Easton Flack	10
Lynette Mason	11
Zane Schmitz	11
Dennis Soughan	13
Jeff Colwell	13
Trudy Black	14
Tim Tope	14
Stanley Venard	17
Shawn Blakeman	17
Ellen Pieper	18
Kellee Chilton Ferguson	18
Byron Gutshall	19
Brianna Blackford	19
Aabiskar Sharma	19
Bryan Johnson	20
Avery Showalter	21
Julie Kaufman	22
Kayla Gutshall	22
Cindy Delaney	23
Bruce Caquelin	23
Steve & Beth Baumeister	29
Mary Dunsmoor	29
Philip Stevens	30
Jerrad & Jenna Kemp	31
Kevin Butler	31

## BOOK TALK

The Reading List by Sarah Nisha Adams is the next book we will discuss. Newsweek simply says, "The Reading List is a quietly beautiful novel about the magic of books and the joy of human connection." We'll discuss that magic and share that joy at 2:00 PM on Monday, February 19 at Ann and Greg Ruble's living room. (And there's always dessert)

## UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

Thank you to all who participated in the bazaar held in November. We had a beautiful day. Thanks to all of the workers and especially all the people who attended. Thank you for your generous support. We really appreciate it.

The next meeting for the UWF will be Wednesday, December 13 at 9:00 AM at the church. Hostesses are the UWF officers, devotions will be given by Mary Dunsmoor, and the program will be an ornament exchange. We will also be recapping the bazaar. Hope to see everyone there!

## FINANCE UPDATE

It has been an exciting time at WUMC. Here are some financial highlights:

- We were able to complete the building of our new Ministry Center at just below our budget. Given the economic uncertainty of the time, this is amazing
- We had been approved for a mortgage of \$3.2 million. We have finalized the loan at \$2.0 million, with monthly payments of \$13,611
- We have retained enough cash in our Capital Fund to cover about 15 months of mortgage payments. We will continually monitor our cash balances and make additional payments on the loan as additional monies are received. The operating budget does not include funds to pay the mortgage
- Our interest rate will be 2.75% until December, 2026, at which time it will be adjusted based on a formula in our mortgage contract. If that formula was used today, our rate would be around 6.5%
- We have been selected by the Annual Conference to receive the fall Builders Call. This will provide some additional funds to apply towards the loan

Where we need your help:

- We anticipate that we will need an additional \$40,000 to \$45,000 to balance our budget this year. If you have been blessed, please consider giving towards our operating budget
- We have received 54 pledge cards back for the 2024 operating budget. Pledges total \$269,000 towards our budget of \$546,000. It is not too late to pledge. Cards are available on the fellowship counter

## WORSHIP SERIES FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS—WAITING...

In December we're in the season of Advent and then Christmas. Advent is a season of four weeks including four Sundays. It is derived from the Latin *adventus*, which means "coming." The season proclaims the coming of the Christ – whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again, who comes continually in Word and Spirit, and whose return in final victory we anticipate. In other words, during Advent, while we're waiting, watching, and anticipating the celebration of Jesus' birth again this year, we're also waiting expectantly for Jesus to come again and put the world to rights.

Our worship series, *Waiting*, focuses on how hard it is to wait for Christmas. As soon as Halloween is done, boom. I saw a meme a couple years ago, showing an angry turkey pointing at Santa Claus, saying, "Wait your turn fat boy. November is mine!" We want to get to the "most wonderful time of the year." What does that mean in our culture? And how does that compare to what the Israelites hoped for, longed for, wanted in the coming of the Messiah? For Advent we're reading Mark's version. Then we'll turn to Luke on Christmas Eve.

November 26, Advent 1 — Mark 13:24-37 The Coming of the Son of Man

December 3, Advent 2 Holy Communion — Mark 1:1-8 The Proclamation of John the Baptist

December 10, Advent 3 — Psalm 126 The Lord Has Done Great Things

December 17, Advent 4 — Luke 1:26-38 The Birth of Jesus Foretold

December 22, Blue Christmas 7 PM — A Service of Hope and Healing

December 24, Christmas Eve 9:30 AM (cantata), 5 PM (modern), and 10:30 PM (traditional and communion) — Luke 2:1-20 Birth of Jesus and the Shepherds

December 31 — Luke 2:21-40 Jesus Is Named and Printed in the Temple

We're excited that we will gather in our new ministry facility for Christmas Eve this year! Since it's a Sunday, Christmas Eve worship will begin at the regular time, 9:30 AM with a special Christmas Cantata. Then we'll gather at 5 PM (modern) and 10:30 PM (traditional and communion). We will enjoy Christmas carols, the story of Jesus' birth, a special time for children (5 PM), Holy Communion (10:30 PM), and more! This year our Christmas Eve worship will livestream on YouTube, Facebook, and [waukeechurch.life](http://waukeechurch.life) at the regular times and available anytime on-demand afterwards too.

All of this kicks off the 12 day Christmas celebration of Jesus' birth, from December 25 through January 5 (until January 6 Epiphany). We have good news to share and celebrate! Please invite everyone you know, especially unchurched family, friends, neighbors, and associates to join us in this celebration of the birth of Christ. This is one of the best moments of the entire year to invite others.

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*This is a  
great time of  
year to invite  
others!*





## COME JOIN US!

We are worshipping in our new building at 2075 SE LA Grant Parkway! Join us at 9:30 AM for Sunday Worship. All are welcome!

You can also find our worship service at **[waukeechurch.life](http://waukeechurch.life)**, **Facebook**, or **YouTube**.

## LUNCH BUNCH

December Lunch Bunch will be Thursday, December 21 at 11:30 AM at the Waukee Pizza Ranch. Pay, meet in the party room for prayer, get your favorites from the buffet, and enjoy your food and fellowship. It's easy and fun. We'll save you a chair!

Dates for 2024 are January 18, February 15, March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17, November 21, and December 19.



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