



Middleton Community UCC
The Communicator
December 2022

“The stories, scriptures, and traditions of the Christmas season have been passed down to us throughout the generations. Many of us enter this season with a swell of memories and emotions as vast as the cultural and religious rituals this holiday holds. Like a tapestry woven throughout time, the Christmas story weaves us in - to remember how God has shown up in the past, to continue the work of collective liberation, to behold the presence of God in flesh and bone.” ([A Sanctified Art. From Generation to Generation Advent Devotional introduction](#))

MCC Beloved,

In preparing for this Advent season I've been thinking a lot about the norms and traditions that have been passed down to me through generations of faithful women. You've probably noticed by now that I talk often of two amazing Grandmothers who helped shape the woman who pastors among you now. Ironically, neither were particularly faithful church-goers.

My paternal grandmother, Lorraine, was a quiet, unassuming, gentle force for love in this world. She was widowed twice while raising 5 boys in a two bedroom house - two of which were born with profound hearing loss. Her life was not easy, but she'd never admit that.

My maternal grandmother, Ramona, was neither quiet, unassuming, nor gentle. But she too was a force for love - just a more chaotic force than Lorraine. Thanksgiving at her house was also loud, but she was usually the center of it, breaking out her musical spoons and singing classic country and western songs around the kitchen table and arguing playfully from one end of the house to the other.

The holidays at Grandma Lorraine's house were crowded. The kids' table wasn't a table - it was the living room floor! We balanced overflowing plates of turkey and potatoes on our knees. But what Grandma Lorraine was most famous for was her cookies. Throughout the year she would bake hundreds of chocolate chip cookies. I don't remember a family event where she didn't walk in with her giant orange tupperware bowl full of chocolate chip cookies.

Christmas was on a whole nother level. She started baking in the summer, filling her deep freezer with every known recipe of Christmas cookies. At the end of November she'd start pulling them out, putting on finishing touches and building elaborate trays of delicious cookie collections. She'd sell them (and just as often gift them) at craft sales around town, where people knew her as “the cookie lady.”

When my Grandma Lorraine died at the wonderful old age of 96, they found a hot cup of tea and a plate of half eaten Christmas cookies sitting on the small table next to her favorite chair.

Holidays spent with my Grandma Ramona were just as crowded, though they were decidedly less sweet (she was diabetic, after all!). Unlike my Grandma Lorraine's expansive family tree that blessed me with countless cousins, Grandma Ramona's descendants were comparably few. The crowd instead came from the “extras.” She never met a stranger. And she never met a stranger she didn't then invite to dinner. My entire life there have been people at my grandmother's table who I wasn't related to, and may never see again, but were fully included in the festivities from beginning to end without question.

To this day I regularly bring friends to the family farm when we gather for Thanksgiving every year. It wouldn't be her house if it didn't come with "extras." And even though she died in 2019 it is definitely still her house.

Families aren't perfect. They often pass down their own trauma along with traditions. But the hope is we learn from where we've come from in hopes of building something better for whoever comes next.

From my grandmothers I've learned the importance of showing up with something sweet and of offering a place to call home to friends, family, and strangers alike. I've carried with me a true sense of hospitality and I take seriously my responsibility to deliver it safely to the next generation.

I believe all of these things are the Gospel, the "Good News of Jesus Christ" whether these two

great women would use that language or not. The story we're preparing to tell in this season is one of sweetness and light, crowded rooms, and radical hospitality. It is a story of God's love being born in this world, completely unavoidable, loud, and gentle, and a complete force for all that is good.

Who taught you this story? What lessons and traditions were passed down to you? How will you pass them down to the next generation?

I'm so grateful to be with you this holy season. To learn your traditions at MCC, and to make some new ones of our own. Blessings to you and yours this Advent season.

Yours, Pastor Zayna

Upcoming Special Services...

Longest Nights Service - Dec 18th, 4:30 pm

The holiday season isn't always "merry and bright." As we hang lights and put out extra candles, it is in recognition that we carry with us the weight of fear, grief, and sadness for a broken world. The Longest Nights service will be a simple service of sharing in prayer, song, and longing for a more just and generous world. Here you are welcome to bring all of yourself and know that we do not walk alone. When hope feels too hard, we carry the light of Christ together. It will **not** be live-streamed on YouTube.

Christmas Worship 4:00 pm and 7:30 pm

Both Christmas Eve services will be full of classic carols, a telling of that most sacred and familiar story, and the singing of Silent Night as we pass the light of Christ among us. **They will both be less than one hour long.** The 4 pm service will be a little shorter and not have a traditional sermon. Instead, it will include a longer, interactive Children's Message. The 7:30 service will feature the MCC Choir and a short sermon from Pastor Zayna. Only the 7:30 service will be live-streamed on YouTube.

Christmas Morning Lessons and Carols with Communion 9:30 am

Because Christmas Day is a Sunday this year, we will have worship at 9:30. This will be a simple Lessons & Carols service with communion. It will **not** be live-streamed on YouTube.

Joseph's Story: December 11

You are invited to join us for this special children and youth led Advent Service! Last year we heard Mary's story with a modern twist. This year it's all about Joseph!

Our children and youth will be leading music, providing special music, and reading scripture, prayers and



poems! Our youth will present a special drama in place of the sermon!

If you have a child or youth who wants to be part of this special morning, please talk to Ms. Deb about music, or [sign-up your children for the various, non-musical, opportunities here.](#)

Family Advent Afternoon – December 4, 2-4pm

Any who wish to join us – families with children, families with grown children or grandchildren, or those who are simply young at heart – are invited to join us for this fun, open-house style Advent Afternoon.

We will have stations where you can make a Nativity “gingerbread” Manger, special ornaments to add to our trees in the Sanctuary, and you can also make a special at-home Advent Wreath.

There will be an array of storybooks available in the Heritage Room to read by the fireplace and Music and Movement (to Christmas music) in the Youth Room.

Fellowship Hall will have tables full of puzzles for you to connect to new friends, or reconnect with old! This will also be where you find an amazing hot chocolate bar, hot apple cider and delicious sugar cookies!



This event is open to the public! So invite some friends to join you. Bring along the Aunts, Uncles, cousins, or Grandparents! (there is NO age limit on this event. Seriously, everyone is welcome! You can even come by yourself.)

If you know you plan to attend, please RSVP by contacting Darci via email, text, or in person. You can also RSVP by signing up on the clipboard at the BOCE table in Fellowship Hall! Reservations aren't required, just helpful! So don't let that stop you from coming!

We are also looking for people who would be willing to help with not only set-up and clean-up, but also to wander around tidying and restocking stations as needed. You can let us know you are ready to join the fun the same way: talk to, email, or text Darci, or simply sign-up at the BOCE table in Fellowship Hall!

Ornaments for Our Tree

Starting December 5, supplies will be available to make a variety of different ornaments for our Sanctuary Christmas tree! You are invited to make ornaments anytime the office is open, or on Sunday mornings before or after the worship service.

Once you finish your ornament, feel free to add it to the tree. It's going to

be so fun watching our tree change throughout Advent!



There will also be an opportunity to make ornaments during our Advent Afternoon on December 4! (Remember, anyone can join this event! It's not just for families with young children.)

Christmas Offering - UCC Christmas Fund

Once again, our Christmas Offering contributions will be donated to the UCC Pension Board Christmas Fund. By giving generously to the Christmas Fund, we will help retired clergy, church staff, and their families to pay bills, maintain health insurance, and meet emergency needs. Year after year, our gifts make a difference, easing the anxiety of constant financial worries.

Special Offering envelopes will be provided in the worship services on December 18, 24, and 25.

Online giving will be available during these weeks, as well.

Last year the Christmas Fund provided over \$1.6 million in pension and health benefits supplementation, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired servants of the church and their families. Every cent of that money came from the pockets of people like you. Please give as generously as you are able this year!



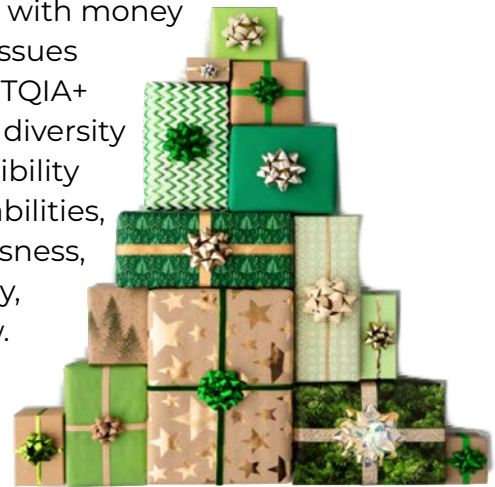
Surprising Gift Nominations – due December 11

Twice a year you have the opportunity to nominate a local, national, or international charitable organization to receive a \$200 Surprising Gift from Middleton Community Church. For 2022, the church budget includes \$2,000 in Surprising Gifts to be allocated across ten recipient organizations during the year:

We are now accepting nominations through Sunday, December 11 for the second round of 2022 Surprising Gifts. The Board of Mission and Stewardship will review the nominations and select five organizations to each receive a \$200 contribution from MCC. Final recipients will be announced and will receive their Surprising Gifts later in December.

Nominations can be made using this [online form](#).

Through this congregational giving program, we've helped over 50 organizations in the last four years, with money going to support issues related to the LGBTQIA+ community, racial diversity and equity, accessibility for those with disabilities, veterans, homelessness, and food insecurity, just to name a few.



Like" our public page: facebook.com/MiddletonCommunityChurch
Join our Members & Friends group: facebook.com/groups/mccmembersandfriends

Warming Tree for MOM

Our congregation has sponsored a mitten tree for many years and this year the tree will look a little different. Middleton Outreach Ministry has asked that this years drive focus on winter coats, boots and kids' pajamas.

New and gently used items are appreciated with all children sizes needed for both boots, coats and pajamas. There will be a donation tree in the entryway and you can leave your donations there.

The drive will run through December 18th and donated items will be collected and delivered to the MOM clothing closet weekly during the drive. Email jneuman253@gmail.com with questions.



MCC Care Ministry

If you would like a telephone check-in, please contact Jim Neuman at jneuman253@gmail.com or 829-0698. We can also help you problem-solve to get your needs met. The card team sends cards to members, friends, and immediate family who are at home or on our church prayer list.

If you would like to be a part of our Care Ministry, receive services or make a referral, contact Jim Neuman at 829-0698.



Save the Date – Pie Auction!

Contributed pies can be homemade or purchased, and you can bid on and purchase as many pies as you'd like! Proceeds will support future youth mission activities.

Watch for more details in January.



Follow us: <https://www.youtube.com/MiddletonUCC>

Adult Faith and Fellowship Opportunities

Adult Sunday School – We will not meet during Advent. We will regather starting January 8 to learn about “Confronting Christian Nationalism” utilizing resources from Vote the Common Good.

If you’d like to be put on our mailing list, contact Lara Romine, lararomine@gmail.com.

Mind/Body/Spirit

This mindfulness group meets in the sanctuary every **1st and 3rd Thursday at 6:30 pm**. This month, we’re going to share some articles related to mindfulness and self-awareness. Everyone is welcome! Please join us! [Contact Brian at BrianWKoenig1@gmail.com](mailto:BrianWKoenig1@gmail.com) for more information.

Choir

Join the MCC Choir! We are a welcoming group of individuals who enjoy singing and learning about music. Rehearsals are **Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm** and we sing in worship about twice per month. Come once to try it out if you're not sure. It's also a great way to connect with fellow MCC members!

Instrumentalists are needed for worship too! We can support and organize solos and ensembles. Contact Deb Neuman for more information: mccmusic@mccucc.org

Adult Game and Craft Club is a new Fellowship opportunity for adults to connect and socialize with relaxed and fun activities. Adults of all ages and abilities are encouraged to attend.

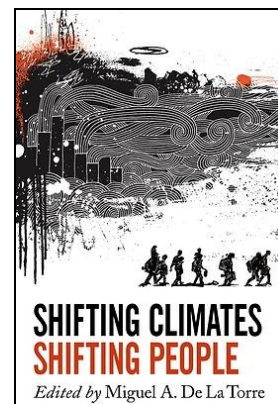
Join us in Fellowship Hall on the **third Wednesday of the month from 11:00am-12:30pm**. A light snack and beverage will be provided.

The Adult Game and Craft Club isn't meeting in December, but will return in 2023!

Tuesday Night Fellowship is taking a holiday break, and will return January 3 with a new book: *The Righteous Mind* by Jonathan Haidt. Buy your own copy and join us next month **Tuesdays at 6 pm** in the Gathering Room for soup, bread, and dessert. Discussion starts at about 6:30, and we try to end by 7:30. Questions? Contact Dave Werner with questions at davewerner86@gmail.com.

Coffee and Conversation

This group meets in a Hybrid format on the **first and third Wednesdays**. Church doors are open by 7:45 am, the discussion starts at 8:00. Coffee is brewed hot and fresh, hot tea and hot chocolate are also available!



Currently, we are discussing the book *Shifting Climates, Shifting People*.

December 7: Chapters 4-6

December 21: Chapters 7-9

Everyone is welcome at these discussions.

The Knitting Group will meet on Thursday December 15 in the Heritage Room from 11:00 a.m. to noon. If you enjoy any needlecraft and would like some fellowship while doing so, please email Beth Michaels at bethmichaels57@gmail.com. If you are interested in joining the meeting online, please contact Beth in advance so she can send you a link.

Children and Youth Faith and Fellowship Opportunities

Connect in Sunday School!

There will be NO Sunday School classes on December 4 (Communion Sunday), December 11 (Children & Youth led Advent Service), Christmas Eve, Christmas Morning, New Year's Day or January 8 (Communion Sunday). We will resume classes on January 15.

The Prayer Ground will be available with quiet activities for children. We also encourage our friends who are in 4th-12th grade to reach out to [Rich Pleva](#) and sign up to do liturgy if they are interested. This involves leading the call to worship and reading scripture during worship.

We are happy to offer Sunday School for all ages at MCC!

On non-communion Sundays, we offer classes, after Moment with Children for **Preschool** (3 years-preK), **Elementary** (K-4 grade), **5/6 grades**, and **7/8 grades**.

High School Youth meet for Faith Formation on the second Sunday of each month from 6:30-8:00 pm. We serve a snack, and spend time learning, but also allow time for fellowship.

Please register your children to help keep our records, and permissions, up to date. Thank you!

[Children: Birth-4th Grade \(2022/23\)](#)
[Youth: 5th-12th grade \(2022/23\)](#)

Masks are optional for church activities

Cupcake Bakers Needed for December 18

We are looking for a few good bakers to provide cupcakes for the Happy Birthday Jesus Party Sunday morning and the Youth Christmas Party Sunday evening.

We are looking for people to provide:



18 gluten-free cupcakes

6 gluten/dairy/egg-free cupcakes

3 dozen cupcakes

ALL cupcakes must be tree nut and peanut free, please.

Who am I kidding, not everyone has time to bake! You can provide purchased cupcakes if that is easier for you! Whether they are home-baked or purchased, all cupcakes need to be delivered to the church kitchen by 9:00 am on Sunday, December 18. If you can help, let Darci or Carol 🐝 know, or sign-up on the clipboard at the CE table in Fellowship Hall.

Children's Pajama Collection for the Warming Tree – Dec. 18

We are encouraging families to celebrate Jesus' Birthday by having your children & youth bring new, warm winter pajamas, in a size they would wear, to Sunday School for the Happy Birthday Jesus Party or to the Youth Group Christmas Party on Sunday, December 18. Please place all unwrapped pajamas under the tree in the Gathering Room.



Pajamas will be donated to MOM to help keep our friends cozy and warm at night.



MCC Youth

Middleton Community Church

Middle and Senior High
Youth Group's
Christmas Party

December 18th
6:30 - 8:00

Register by Wednesday,
December 14th

Middle School Sign-up 

High School Sign-up 

Celebrate Christmas with your friends and
build a pasta bar meal together

Middle and High School Youth Group Christmas Party

Join us to celebrate Christmas together by making a pasta bar meal together.

When you **register by Wednesday, December 14th** you'll be able to **select what food items you wish to contribute** to the meal. Friends are welcome, they will need to register as well.

Youth will join in collecting pajamas for the Warming Tree as part of celebrating Jesus' birthday. **Please bring new, warm, winter pajamas**, in the size that they would wear. These donations will go to MOM. Please bring unwrapped pajamas with you **to the Youth Group Christmas Party**. Thank you.

[High School Youth Group Sign-up](#)
[Middle School Youth Group Sign-up](#)

Youth Winter Retreats at Camp Balsams

High School | January 20-22

Middle School | February 24-26

Cost: \$75 for the first child, \$125 for two, \$150 max per family. (family discount applies across both retreats)



Hiking - Games - Fellowship
Learning - Outdoor Play



Our Winter Youth Retreats are a wonderful opportunity for our Youth to learn, play and bond up in the beautiful Northwoods! This year's topic is Racial Justice. The High School Youth will look at Racial Justice in regard to our Indigenous friends. The Middle School group will take a more general look at Racial Justice as a whole.

Our **High School retreat** is for youth in 9th-12th grades. We will meet at the church at 12:30pm, and be on the road no later than 1:00 pm on Friday afternoon. We will plan to arrive back on Sunday between 3:00 & 5:00 pm.

The **Middle School retreat** is for youth in 5th-8th grades. We will meet at the church at 2:30 pm, and be on the road no later than 3:00 pm on Friday afternoon. We will plan to arrive back on Sunday between 3:00 & 5:00 pm.

Space is limited! So sign-up early.

[High School Registration](#)
[Middle School Registration](#)

Winter Retreats at Camp Balsams

Camp Balsams, on Bass Lake near Eagle River, is a great base camp for your retreat in the north woods this winter, with snowshoeing, cross country skiing and ice fishing available



nearby. Charlie's Cabin is open year-round and is a warm and inviting place for relaxing, reading and sharing good fellowship.

Please contact Anne in the church office (mccucc@middletonucc.org) about winter openings.



Healing House Volunteer Opportunities – Sunday, January 15

The Healing House provides a safe place and home health services for homeless families while a family member recuperates after hospitalization. Our next chance to provide food will be Sunday, January 15, 2023 when we will provide dinner meals for January 15 & 16. A sign-up sheet will be up in Fellowship Hall on the Mission and Stewardship table beginning in

early December. Each MCC volunteer may choose to provide one or more portions of a meal. All food will be delivered to Ross Michaels at the January 15 church service, or you may make other arrangements with Ross. New volunteers are welcome. Please contact Ross at rossmichaels53@gmail.com to sign up or for more information. Thank you!

Post-COVID Transition Team Update

MCC's COVID response is tied to the current COVID-19 Community Level in Dane County. When the level is LOW, masking is completely optional. When it rises to MEDIUM, masks are required while singing. [Find the current level here.](#)

The Post-COVID Transition team will continue to monitor COVID conditions and may reinstate stricter policies if COVID transmission worsens again.

Our church strives to provide as many opportunities to connect as possible, and for that reason, we are continuing the live-streamed service as well as hybrid activities. We will also continue streaming the service to Fellowship Hall, where worshipers are welcome to sit and watch the service.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Weber at moderator@middletonucc.org

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday 8am to noon

Stay in touch: Contact the staff via phone and e-mail. If we don't answer the phone, please leave a message; our voicemail messages are automatically forwarded to staff email.

Office:
(608)831-4694

Pastor Zayna Thomley

mccpastor@middletonucc.org

Anne Tennies, Office Manager

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Darci Warner, Faith Formation Director

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Carol Bennington,

Youth and Children Coordinator

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Deb Neuman, Music Director

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Barbara Brown, Pianist

mccpianist@middletonucc.org

**Gary Eckstein, Building & Grounds
Manager**

mccbuidingmanager@middletonucc.org

Website:

www.middletonucc.org

Ways You Can Support Our Mission Partners

Middleton Outreach Ministry

For current pantry hours and procedures, [Click HERE](#).

[Current Top 10 most requested items](#)

To donate, visit momhelps.org and click "Donate."

The Road Home Dane County

Support vulnerable families (including Healing House, a joint ministry with Just Dane).

Visit trhome.org/ and click "Donate."

MCPASD School Feeding Programs

[Click HERE](#) for more information or to donate.

Madison Schools Feeding Programs

free meals to all children 18 and under

Visit <https://food.madison.k12.wi.us> for times and locations for food distribution.

Middleton Youth Center

[Click HERE](#), and then click "donate to the Youth Center here."

Orion Family Services

Orion Family Services can now accept online donations at www.orionfamilyservices.org. If you're interested in getting updates about their work, you can sign up to receive their newsletter.

Horizon High School

Visit horizonhs.org and click "Donate."

Wisconsin Conference UCC

Emergency Response Fund to support churches facing significant financial challenges

Give online at wcucc.org by clicking the red "Donate" button at the top of the page.

Dane County COVID-19 Emergency and Recovery Fund

Funds will be split into two approaches: Short-term emergency and Long-term response and recovery. [Click HERE](#), then click "Donate Here."

Red Cross

There is currently a severe blood shortage. To make an appointment, visit redcrossblood.org

Financial donations are also appreciated. [Click HERE](#) for all the ways you can donate.

Voces de la Frontera Direct Relief Fund: COVID-19 Relief for Undocumented Workers

Voces de la Frontera, is raising critical funds to ensure the most vulnerable members of our communities will be able to meet their basic needs. Donate at <https://bit.ly/VocesReliefFund>

Fair Trade Sale

MCC's annual Fair Trade Sale is back in Fellowship Hall for this Holiday Season. The sale will be open after worship each Sunday until Christmas Eve. This year features handcrafted items from around the world (SERRV), along with soup mixes (Women's Bean Project), soaps/lotions (Franciscan Peacemakers), bracelets (4ocean), coffee, tea, candles, and more. On December 11, a representative from Porchlight



Products will also have a table to sell their products to support local programs

Choosing to purchase fair trade goods is a way that we at MCC connect faith and life. Fair Trade is a choice to support responsible companies, empower farmers and workers, and protect the environment. In other words, it's a world-changing way of doing business.

A Fair Trade gift means giving three ways!! First to your recipient, then to MCC's Missions, but most of all to the artisans and agricultural workers who receive a living wage for their wares.

If you would like to help with the sale, please contact Janet Ruzala-Coughlin at janetrcoughlin@gmail.com or 608-333-8182.

*"For I hand on to you as of first importance what I in turn have received."
1 Corinthians 15:3*

Happy December Birthday!

Sara Anderson	Lisa Opitz
Alexis Barrett	Chris Paulsen
Natalie Chandler	Andrew Phelps
Peggy Comerford	Leander Pottinger
Brooklyn Corrigan	Abigail Rogers
John DesRivieres	Alex Statz
Carrie Doersch	Jessica St. Clair
Rodney Doersch	Tim St. Clair
Jeff Durkee	Audrey Sullivan
Clayton Janikowski	Adrian Tennies
Patricia Kerr	Joe Tennies
Brian Koenig	Barbara Weber
Sue Olsen	

If we missed yours, please contact the office.

Birthdays & Anniversaries!

Happy December Anniversary!

Barb & Dave Werner
Mary & Steve Wilson

*Did we miss yours?
Contact the church office
and let us know.*

December 2022

Click the links to join the online meetings. Visit our [Google Calendar](#) for dial-in instructions.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Sunday worship: 9:30am In-Person and LiveStream at youtube.com/MiddletonUCC</p>				<p>1 11-1 pm Pastor's Public Office Hours 6:30pm Mindfulness</p>	2	3
<p>4 9:30am Communion Worship (YouTube) 10:30am Fellowship Fair Trade Sale 2-4pm Advent Afternoon</p>	<p>5 10am Staff Meeting 6:45pm Bd of Christian Ed 7pm Board of Worship</p>	<p>6 10:30am Pastoral Relations Committee</p>	<p>7 8am Coffee & Conversation H 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm A/V Tech Check</p>	<p>8 5:30pm SWA Mtg</p>	9	10
<p>11 Children/Youth Led Advent Service 9:30am Worship (YouTube) 10:30am Fellowship/FT Sale 2-4pm Caroling 6:30-8pm HS Sunday School</p>	<p>12 10am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Board of Finance Bd of Membership and Fellowship</p>	<p>13 5:30pm Board of Mission and Stewardship</p>	<p>14 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm A/V Tech Check</p>	<p>15 11-1 pm Pastor's Public Office Hours 6:30pm Mindfulness</p>	16	17 Staff Christmas Party
<p>18 9:30am Worship (YouTube) 9:45am Sunday School 10:30am Fellowship/FT Sale 4:30pm Longest Nights Service 6:30-8pm Youth Group Party</p>	<p>19 10am Staff Meeting 6:45pm Council Mtg H</p>	20	<p>21 8am Coffee & Conversation H I 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm A/V Tech Check</p>	<p>22 11am Knitting Group 11am-1 pm Pastor's Public Office Hours</p>	23	<p>24 Christmas Eve 4:00pm Kid-Friendly Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7:30pm Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (YouTube)</p>
<p>25 Christmas Day 9:30am Worship: Lessons and Carols</p>	<p>26 Office Closed</p>	<p>27 Office Closed</p>	<p>28 Office Open 8-noon</p>	<p>29 Office Closed Creative Soul Winter Camp</p>	<p>30 CS Camp</p>	<p>31 New Year's Eve</p>

"To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake, it is necessary to stand out in the cold."
 — Aristotle

[BLUE](#) indicates online meetings/events

H indicates hybrid (in person or online)