



The Banner

Every person feels, knows and shares God's love

Newsletter for Bethany United Methodist Church • Madison, WI • Vol. 56, No. 12 • December 2024

Advent Season at Bethany

❄️ **Sunday, December 1 — You Are Blessed (10:00 am)**

❄️ **Sunday, December 8 — Do the Good that Is Yours to Do (10:00 am)**

❄️ **Sunday, December 15 — Festive Attire Day (10:00 am)
All Ages Christmas Program**

- Adult Choir anthems and congregational singing
- Narrators and nativity scenes (with participants of all ages)
- "Away in a Manger" song by the children
- Wear your Christmas pajamas, your new Christmas outfit, your ugly Christmas sweater or your most sparkly outfit, as we practice joy

❄️ **Wednesday, December 19 — Longest Night Service (7:00 pm)**

On this longest night of the year we will pray for one another as we acknowledge that for many people, Christmas is a time of loneliness, sorrow, alienation, and sadness. This service offers a way for people to claim those feelings and still feel surrounded by the compassionate love of God.

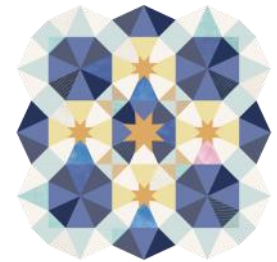
❄️ **Sunday, December 22 — Hope Is Worth the Risk**

❄️ **Sunday, December 22 — Christmas Caroling (3:00 pm)**

Christmas carolers of all ages are invited to spread cheer through the neighborhood. We will meet at the church to practice at 3:00 pm, journey through the neighborhood, and return to the church for hot soup before going home at 5:00 pm

❄️ **Tuesday, December 24: Christmas Eve (4:30 pm & 7:00 pm) — Love Knows Your Name**
Christmas Eve Candlelight Services — Both services are designed to celebrate the birth of Christ through choir, bell choir, scripture, hymns, prayers and a special time for children.

❄️ **Sunday, December 29 — Lessons & Laughter**



WORDS
FOR THE BEGINNING





PASTOR'S COLUMN



As I write this snow is falling for the first time this season and it feels like winter has arrived. The trees and other decorations are being pulled out of storage in anticipation of Advent. This year December 1 marks the first Sunday of Advent. While it is a busy time in the church and in the world, it is also one of my favorite times. I love the nostalgia of Christmas. Singing familiar Christmas songs, reminiscing as I set up my own Christmas decorations, and hearing from family and friends are some of the things I look forward to. And yet, Christmas is different each year. New memories are made as we bring one year to a close and anticipate the next.

Our Advent theme this year is "For the Beginning." In the church calendar Advent is the beginning of a new church year. Perhaps it is the beginning of other things for you as well. A time to reflect on the previous year and begin to prepare for a new year. What lessons



and joys will you carry forward? What things might you want to leave behind? Our Advent scriptures will explore the lessons we might want to carry forward into a new year. If you haven't already picked up a devotional or Advent calendar, I urge you to do so. The art, reflections, and poetry are wonderful ways to experience Advent from a spiritual perspective amid the busyness of secular Christmas activities.

I'm looking forward to the beautiful worship experiences we have planned. Our program staff worked together to create a Christmas program for all ages. We are so blessed with such creative and dedicated people who care about inclusion and worked to create a program that showcases our entire church family. We have some fun events planned, such as Christmas caroling and a service of laughter. There is also the longest night service for those struggling with joy this year. I pray this Advent will fill your hearts with peace, joy and love as we prepare for the birth of Christ.

Blessings,
Pastor Julie

ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE

Bethany's Annual Church Conference is scheduled for Wednesday, December 11 at 6:00 pm. Our District Superintendent will lead us in reviewing our ministry highlights from 2024, and reflecting on our vision for the future. We will also vote on our Lay Leadership Report, Pastoral Compensation, and Care and Removal of Members. All members are encouraged to attend the Church Conference.

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Advent begins December 1st. The Advent Devotional, *Words for the Beginning: Art, Poetry and Reflections for Advent*, is available to be picked up at church. If you would prefer an electronic copy, the Church Office can email you a copy. You are encouraged to read each week's entry as we take this journey through the Advent season.

PHOTO-A-DAY ADVENT CHALLENGE

This Advent, deepen your reflection on the season through a daily photo challenge. Each day, use the word provided to inspire your creativity and faith. Capture its meaning through a photo and share it on social media tagging Bethany UMC. As you take time each day to focus on the beauty and spirit of the season, let your photos become a visual prayer, a reminder of hope, joy, and peace. It's a simple way to reflect on the journey toward Christmas and share your Advent story with others.

ADVENT PHOTO-A-DAY CHALLENGE
@sanctifiedart

For each day of Advent, we invite you to take a photo inspired by the word of the day. Share your daily photos on social media along with the words that inspired them.

DEC.1 BEGIN	DEC.2 BLESS	DEC.3 COURAGE	DEC.4 POSSIBILITY	DEC.5 REMEMBER
DEC.6 MARVEL	DEC.7 GO	DEC.8 TOGETHER	DEC.9 EMBRACE	DEC.10 JOURNEY
DEC.11 PEACEMAKER	DEC.12 CONNECTION	DEC.13 ENOUGH	DEC.14 GOODNESS	DEC.15 WORTHY
DEC.16 REPAIR	DEC.17 MAGNIFY	DEC.18 MERCY	DEC.19 DREAM	DEC.20 HOPE
DEC.21 RISK	DEC.22 GRACE	DEC.23 JOY	DEC.24 LOVE	DEC.25 AMAZEMENT



SIMPLE GIFTS



During the month of December, Simple Gift collections are going to support [Porchlight](#), which strives to reduce homelessness in Dane County. Porchlight collaborates with the community to provide shelter, affordable housing, and support services that eliminate barriers and empower the individuals and families it serves. Its programming would not be possible without gifts from generous individuals, businesses, organizations, and foundations in our community.

Simple Gifts can be made by placing loose coins in the offering plates, or by putting cash or a check in mission envelopes. One can also mail in your offering — or can give online at [BethanyMadison.org](#) (click on We Serve and, from the drop-down menu, select Giving Financially).

Porchlight offers a range of core services that include:

- **Housing:** Porchlight is the largest non-profit provider of affordable housing in Madison, with 350 units across 26 sites, ranging from single-room occupancy (SRO) units to family units with 1-4 bedrooms. Porchlight’s largest property is at 306 N. Brooks St. in Madison, which also houses its administrative offices. Porchlight also has housing programs that specialize in working specifically with veterans and individuals with mental illness.
- **Men’s Emergency Shelter:** This shelter, located at 2002 Zeier Road in Madison, provides emergency overnight shelter to male-identified individuals over the age of 18. Guests receive two meals per day, personal hygiene supplies, access to showers and bathrooms, and case management services. Shelter hours are 5 p.m. to 8 a.m.
- **DIGS Prevention Program:** Porchlight’s Dwelling Intervention Grants & Sustenance program (DIGS) provides housing-related emergency assistance to individuals and families in Dane County who are facing eviction and therefore at risk of becoming homeless. Additionally, DIGS offers financial support to those who have secured affordable housing but need assistance with their first month’s rent and security deposit.
- **Veterans:** The Veterans Transitional Housing Program (VTHP) is a grant and per diem collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Located on Spring Street, VTHP is a 24-bed, single-room occupancy, transitional program for male-identified individuals who are military veterans and are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.
- **Safe Haven:** Safe Haven is a day shelter for adults with mental illness on Madison’s east side. Shelter guests have access to two meals per day, showers, laundry, bus tickets, mail, and phone services. Safe Haven also provides housing-focused case management and crisis stabilization services funded through Medicaid. Program staff specialize in building rapport with vulnerable individuals who may not otherwise engage in mainstream services.



Christmas Eve: UMCOR Disaster Response

There will be a special collection on Christmas Eve to support the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Disaster Response fund. Half of the collection will support disaster response in the United States, and half internationally. 100% of all money donated goes directly to those in need.

In the U.S., when a disaster overwhelms a community’s ability to recover on its own, UMCOR provides training, relief supplies, case management, and supports long-term rebuilding efforts. When a natural or human-caused disaster strikes outside of the U.S., UMCOR provides immediate funds to its partners to distribute food, hygiene supplies and other necessities to ease human suffering. In the long-term, UMCOR works with partners toward recovery and reconstruction, while maintaining focus on disaster preparedness and training to help reduce the damaging effects of future disasters.

SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE (IN-PERSON AND YOUTUBE)

Sunday, October 6 Total 148	Sunday, October 13 Total 165	Sunday, October 20 Total 173	Sunday, October 27 Total 206
Sunday, November 3 Total 184	Sunday, November 10 Total 191	Sunday, November 17 Total 151	Sunday, November 24 Total 202



WEST HIGH DECA AND BETHANY UMC JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT THE ALLIED DRIVE FOOD PANTRY

In an inspiring display of community spirit, members of the West High DECA club and Bethany United Methodist Church (UMC) teamed up for a successful food drive to benefit the Allied Drive Food Pantry. Through their collaborative efforts, the group collected an overwhelming amount of donations, making a meaningful impact on the pantry's mission to support families in need.

Students from West High's DECA club led the charge, collecting bags of non-perishable food from the community. Their hard work was evident as the church library quickly filled with donations, creating an impressive mountain of support for the pantry. The generosity didn't stop there—Bethany UMC members stepped in to help with the next critical step: delivery.

Thanks to the efforts of church volunteers, five carloads of food were delivered to the Allied Drive Food Pantry. In addition to the delivery, Bethany UMC members also assisted with sorting and organizing the items, ensuring that the pantry was ready to distribute them to those in need.

We are incredibly grateful to both the DECA students and the church members for their dedication and kindness. Their collective efforts made a significant difference for families in our community who rely on the pantry's services.

We look forward to future collaborations and continued efforts to support those in need!





BETHANY NEWS



GREETINGS FROM THE YOUTH GROUP!

Youth Group is for any youth in grades 6-12. Youth are encouraged to bring a friend—they do not need to be Bethany members. All are welcome! For more information, please contact [Kathy Mohs](#), Youth Director.



On Sunday, Oct. 20th Bethany's Youth Group went to Schuster's Farm. It was an epic adventure filled with connecting, shenanigans, treats and pumpkins.

Youth Mission Trip

Our Summer Youth Mission Trip will be June 22-28, 2025 and we will be heading to Cleveland, OH! Bethany youth will be teaming up with youth and their directors from Sugar River UMC, First UMC, Peoples UMC as well as Salem Church in Verona! This mission trip is with the program Next Step Ministries, which is based out of Madison. Any youth that will be completing grades 6-12 in 2025 are welcome to come! For more information, please contact Kathy Mohs, Youth Director at youth@bethanymadison.org

LOOKING TOWARD ADVENT



Following worship on November 24, many people stayed to help decorate the church for Advent. In addition, there was cookie decorating, Christmas crafts and lunch. Many hands make light work and the church looks wonderful.

Thank you to all who helped.





BETHANY NEWS



Game Nights

Children, youth and adults enjoyed two fall Game Nights (Oct 12, Nov 9) in Fellowship Hall. Highlights of these Saturday gatherings (typically 4:30 - 6:30 pm) include: Euchre, puzzles, the coloring table, the toddler play area, and Scrabble. Thanks to Steve Nelson who prepares a delicious supper each time, allowing participants to engage in relaxed conversation over a hot meal, halfway through the event. Perhaps you would enjoy participating next time! Look for new fellowship dates to be announced in the new year.





Pheasant Branch Seed Collection (October 26)

It seemed fitting that during the "Wilderness" worship theme this fall, a group from Bethany ventured off the trail at Pheasant Branch Conservancy (PBC) to collect prairie seeds. Under the guidance of a PBC naturalist, we searched for mountain mint, cream gentian, and two types of asters. These seeds will now journey to the Dane County Seed Shed, where they will be sorted and bagged for distribution in the spring to start or diversify local prairies.



WILDERNESS WORSHIP SERVICE

The months of October and November took us on a journey through the wilderness. Many people read and discussed "Field Notes for the Wilderness" by Sarah Bessey in small groups, both in person and via Zoom. In worship, we created Wilderness Jars using sand, sticks, rocks, and moss. Sunday School children painted shapes for a tree mobile, illustrated portions of Psalm 139, and learned the song "Like A Rock" to share in worship. Candles were lit during All-Saints Day worship to remember loved ones who died this past year; in addition, congregation members were invited to write names on the prayer table tablecloth of any loved ones in their hearts. These wilderness experiences offered opportunities to reflect, connect, and absorb God's love.





United Methodist Church

3910 Mineral Point Road
Madison, WI 53705-5911



We are a Reconciling Congregation,
welcoming all people to be a part of
our church family.

Information

Office Hours: 8 am - 2:30 pm, Monday — Friday

Church Office: (608) 238-6381

Email: BethanyOffice@BethanyMadison.org

Website: bethanymadison.org

Sunday Morning Schedule

Coffee Fellowship 9:30 am
Worship (in person and on YouTube) 10:00 am
Coffee Fellowship Following Worship

Staff

Lead Pastor Rev. Julie Wilson
Pastor of Visitation Rev. Brad Mather
Deacon Rev. Kory Douglass
Office Administrator..... Carl White
Director of Children’s Ministries & Music Lisa Weaver
Youth Director Kathy Mohs
Director of Music Kristie Halverson
Interim Music Director..... Erin McConnell
Director of Bell Choirs Nick Bonaccio
Organist..... Sue Poullette
Pianist..... Evan Lange