



Weekly Booster

CHURCH STAFF

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pastordavid@shen.church

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Pianist

Terry Stafford

Bells & Choir Directors

Dan & Linnea Shook

Multimedia & Website

Jeff Hiser

Sunday Media Booth

Alan Hutchison

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Sunday Facebook Host

Craig Harris,

Facebook Contributors

Pastor David B. Clark,

Barb Cunningham,

Craig Harris, Jeff Hiser

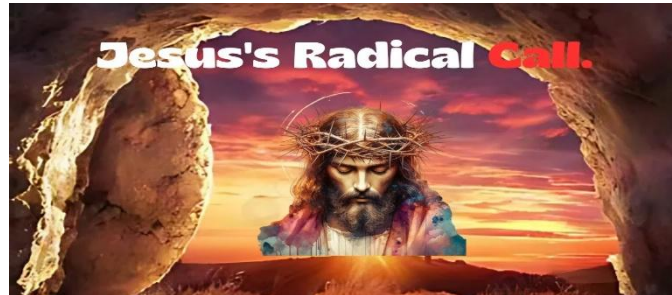
Sunday Praise Team

Terry Stafford, Linda Haldane,

Margaret Brady, Deb Finlay,

Jeff Hiser, Pastor David

*Our Vision: **Growing** as
disciples of Jesus while
connecting with others and
serving our community.*



Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

Instruction on Transformational, Kingdom-Centered Living

Few passages of Scripture have shaped Christian faith and practice as profoundly as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Delivered to a throng of people from a mountainside, Jesus' words echo over the centuries in a way that both declares the Kingdom of God and gives readers instruction for living as citizens of that kingdom.

Far from being a list of rules, however, this speech is a vision of what it means to follow Christ wholeheartedly. It allows us to read carefully to understand how to apply the teachings of Jesus as he was beginning his transformational ministry.

Knowing that the Kingdom of God had come to the world (see Mark 1:15), Jesus explained to the gathered people—and to people who have gathered over the centuries to study these words—how the world would change through his life and ministry.

The *NIV Application Bible* says this in its opening study note on Matthew 5: "Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is not for a few highly committed believers. The book of Matthew is a manual on discipleship, and throughout most of church history, this Gospel has been used to provide the content of instruction for fully formed Christian living."

Continued on page 2

"People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day." Winnie the Pooh

*"Life is like a sewer...what you get out of it depends on what you put into it."
Tom Lehrer*

Reminders

November 23rd

Sunday Service 9:00 a.m.
PK-6 S.S. during the message
Jr/Sr High S.S. – 10:30 a.m.

November 25th

Mat Making (Loom Room) 1:00 p.m.

November 26th

Bible Study – 11:00 a.m.
Praise Team - 4:00 p.m.
Bell Choir – 4:30 p.m.
Chancel Choir – 5:30 p.m.

November 27th

T.O.P.S.

Office Closed for Thanksgiving

Meals-On-Wheels Deliveries
Sign up at the Welcome Counter

** Fellowship Volunteers and treats
needed, sign up in Fellowship Hall

24th Sunday
After Pentecost

November 23, 2025

1 John 1:1-10

Jesus' Sermon - continued from page 1.

So what did Jesus actually say in this critical teaching? In this post, we will sample different sections of the sermon and highlight many key insights.

The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3–12

Imagine sitting by the mountainside on that day and hearing Jesus' teaching:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Even reading these words today makes one think, "Can you be serious, Jesus?" How can the downtrodden—the poor, the mourning, the meek, the hungry, those who experience the worst of what can happen in this world every single day—understand that they are in fact blessed?

One of the keys to understanding the beatitudes comes in the book of John as Jesus is talking about remaining closely connected to him: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

The Beatitudes call us to a life that sees our circumstances as opportunities to understand the continuing work of God in our lives. Staying connected to Jesus through the study of God's Word and through the internal power of the Holy Spirit, we can look forward with hope to discover more of the blessings that Jesus provides, the times when we wonder if God even hears our prayers.

Continued on page 11

Volunteers Needed



LAST PERSON LEAVING
PLEASE TURN OUT LIGHTS
AND LOCK DOORS

First United Methodist Church

**Please wear your
name tag on
Sunday mornings**



Church Ad Board Members

Michelle Morelock - Chair
Mary Peterson - Secretary
Margaret Brady - Vice Chair & Trustee
Roger Jones - Trustee
Bob Lynn - SPRC
Barb Lundgren - Finance
Dave Lashier - Treasurer
Craig Harris - Lay Member to Annual Conference
Connie Anderson - Memorials
Linda Haldane - Membership
David Clark - Pastor

Church Office Hours

**** Children & Jr.-Sr. High
Sunday School –
Starting September 7th.
PK-6 during service
Jr/Sr High 10:30 a.m.**

**Wednesday
Praise Team – 4:00 p.m.
Bell Choir – 4:30 p.m.
Chancel Choir – 5:30 p.m.**

The front door to the church
will be locked during office
hours. Please ring the
doorbell to be let into the
church.

Monday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Tuesday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Wednesday

Office Closed
Bible Study 11:00

Thursday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Friday

9:00-11:00
12:00-3:00

Please continue to call in
advance if you need to
enter the church to make
sure someone is in the
office. If you reach the
answering machine,
please leave your name,
number, and a brief
message, and your call
will be returned. Calls
after 2:00 p.m. may be
returned on the next
business day.



For how many days was
the feast of booths
observed according to
Leviticus?

- a) 3 days
- b) 7 days
- c) 12 days
- d) 30 days

How many people did
Jonathan and his armour-
bearer kill at their first strike?

- a) 20
- b) 50
- c) 100
- d) 110

Whose weapons were taken
away while he was sleeping?

- a) Saul
- b) Gideon
- c) Samson
- d) Jephthah

**Check page 4 for answers from
the previous week.**



23rd – Aaron Burdorf
25th – Carl & Ann Priebe
26th – Cheri Christiansen
27th – Bradford (Buck) Mueller
28th – Zach Crowdes

****See a wrong birthday or anniversary, or need one added? Please call
the office or send an email to office@shen.church**

**Shenandoah First United
Methodist Church**

200 Church St.
Shenandoah, IA 51601

Phone 712-246-2081

Church E-mail
office@shen.church

Same address – a new look at
<https://shen.church>



<https://shenchurch.onechurchsoftware.com/>



United Methodist Church,
Shenandoah, IA

<https://www.facebook.com/methodist.church.shenandoah>



Services are now on our YouTube
channel only.

<https://www.youtube.com/@shen.church8192/streams>

***Prelude/Postlude/Accompanist: Terry Stafford**

Call to Worship

Leader: We gather in the presence of the One who is light and life.

People: We come to walk in the light together.

L: In God, there is no darkness at all.

P: In God, our joy finds its fullness.

L: Rooted in love, grounded in grace-

P: We come to worship God with grateful hearts.

"BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER"

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:1-10

Songs

Joyful, Joy, We Adore The #89

10,000 Reasons (screens)

Come, Ye Thankful People Come #694

Last Week's Attendance

In-Person Worship – 84

Online Worship – 11

Our Vision:

"Growing as disciples of Jesus while connecting with others and serving our community."

Answers for Nov 16th are c) Rahab d) 12 goats c) four times

Quiz hints – Q1) Leviticus Q 2) 1 Samuel Q3) 1 Samuel



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Two Volunteers Needed each Thursday

to Deliver Meals

**Sign-Up Sheet is on the
Welcome Center Counter**



DECEMBER 2025

Chili Beans, Cake, Brownie and Muffin Mixes, Chicken Noodle and Chunky Style Soups, Green Beans, Corn, Spinach, Sauerkraut, Mandarin Oranges, Cinnamon Applesauce, Canned Tuna or Chicken, Hamburger, Tuna, and Chicken Helpers, Cereal, Instant Oatmeal Packets, Potato Flakes and Boxed Potatoes, Bar Soap.

There are times when people who use the Food Pantry come to the pantry on foot. They are then forced to walk home carrying, pushing, or pulling several pounds of food. Southwest Iowa Transit, for a very reasonable fee of \$5.00, will take individuals home with their food items. If you are interested in helping pay for these fees, simply seal your cash (whatever you would like to give) in a plain envelope and add it to your donated food items.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Community Food Pantry. We exist totally on donations; we couldn't assist those in need without your help!

If you or anyone who would be interested in volunteering at the Food Pantry, please have them contact Jeannine K. Liljedahl at 712-215-2488.

Bring Your Change to Make a Change

*Collected each Sunday after
the children's message*



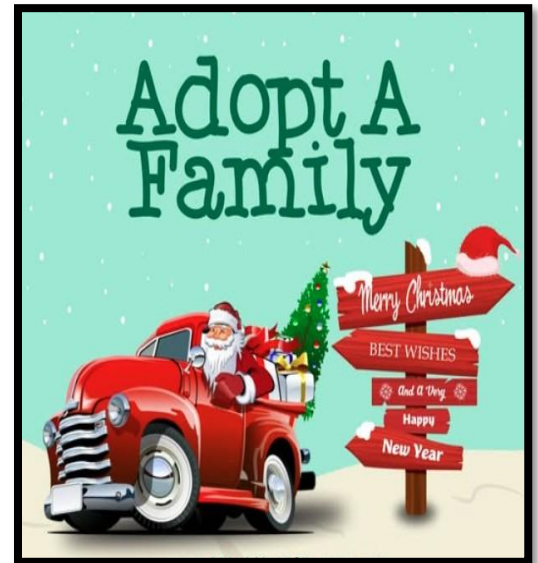
Each of you should GIVE what you have decided in YOUR HEART to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES a cheerful GIVER." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The Noisy Offering is one more way to do ministry for those in need and teach your children the importance of giving and serving. Each Sunday, a new opportunity for mission giving will take place after the Children's Message. Sunday School students will walk around the congregation, collecting your loose coins and currency in their colorful metal pails. This would be a good time to clean out the loose change from your pockets or purse. The money donated in November will go to the **Adopt-A-Family**.

We are ready to take your orders for poinsettias to help decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season. If you are interested in purchasing one "In Honor of" or "In Memory of," please fill out a POINSETTIA ORDER FORM that is located on the Welcome Center information desk or attached to the booster. Each poinsettia is \$17.00. Please put your prepaid check or cash and order form in the envelope provided with the form and place it in the wooden offering boxes. We encourage you to order early (only 30 poinsettias were ordered) and appreciate your kindness in helping make our sanctuary colorful for the Christmas season.



Over 33 years ago, there was a dream of all community families having a happy and healthy holiday, and through some brainstorming, the **Adopt-A-Family** project began. Our church will provide a local family in need with a brighter holiday with gifts appropriate for their age or need. No adult information will be given; this way, we can help the children in more families. This year, we will be able to ask for contributions of money in the Mission Cans as we have done before. The mission Cans are placed on top of the wooden offering boxes and just inside the middle set of the sanctuary doors. As soon as the **Adopt-A-Family** committee contacts the church regarding the size of the family and items on their wish list, that information will be listed in the Booster. Thanks for your ongoing support for this important community project.



Join us for the annual Harvest Dinner this coming Sunday after the Hanging of the Greens. The meat and potatoes will be furnished. You are asked to bring a side dish and your own table setting. This is a free will donation. Mark your calendar!



The Christmas season is fast approaching, and we have two wonderful opportunities for you to share the joy of the season through caroling! Both nights are open to **anyone** who would like to participate.

1. "Night the Lights Come On" Downtown Caroling

When: Saturday, November 29th

What: We've been invited to be a part of the downtown festivities for "Night the Lights Come On."

To Participate: If you would like to join the group caroling that evening, please contact the **church office** as soon as possible.

2. Annual Church Christmas Caroling

When: Sunday, December 14th

What: This is our traditional annual caroling night, sharing the Christmas spirit with our community.

Details: This event is open to everyone! More information regarding the time and location will be announced soon.

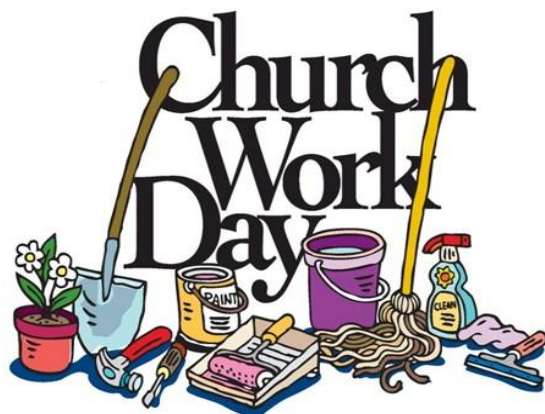
We look forward to making a joyful noise with you this Christmas season!



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



**Sunday, December 14th
During Church Service**



Saturday, November 22nd
8:30 a.m.

Saint Cecilia Choir

95th Annual Vespers

Sunday

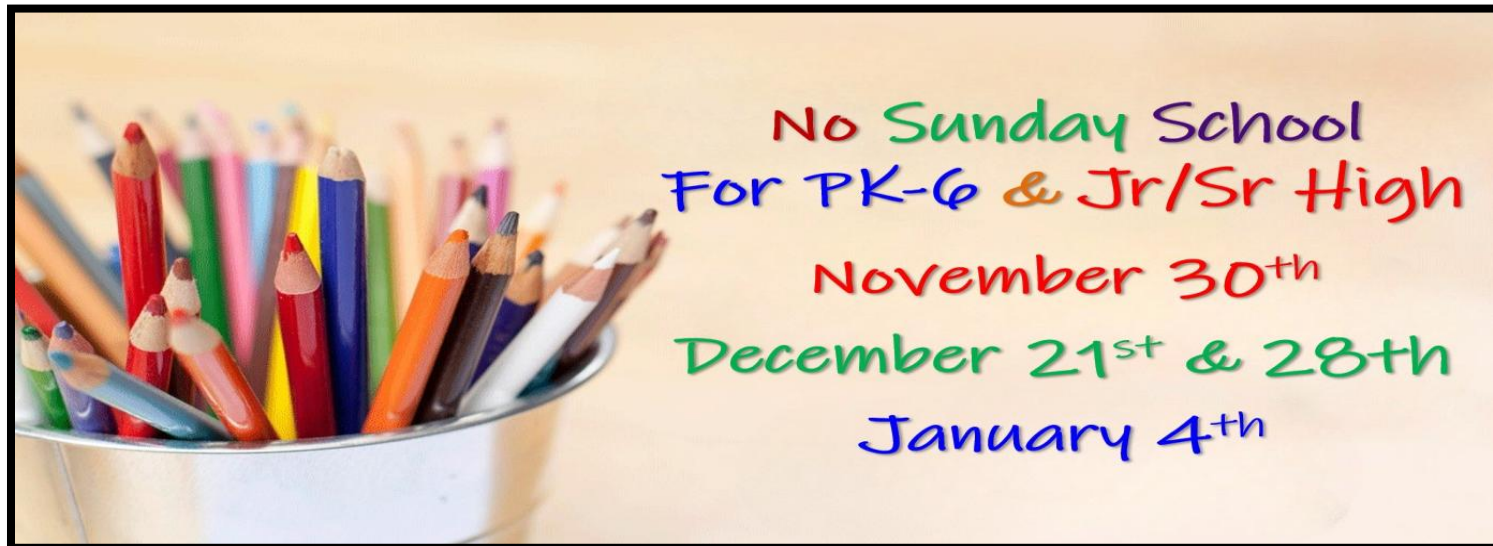
Nov. 30th, 2025



Hamburg
 First Baptist Church
 at 2:00
 1501 Main Street

Sidney
 United Faith Church
 at 4:30
 1975 US HWY 275

On Sunday, the 30th, the St. Cecilia Choir will be performing their 95th Annual Christmas Vespers. This year, they will perform in Hamburg at the First Baptist Church starting at 2:00 p.m. and in Sidney at United Faith Church starting at 4:30 p.m.



The Hispanic Center is now collecting items for their Christmas Shoe Boxes. There are 16 children, which includes 9 girls ages 8-16 years of age and 5 boys ages 2 ½ -16 years old. Children's lists of ages are on a sheet on the Welcome Center counter. If you plan to purchase for one of the children, please bring the gift to the church by December 15th. You may also contact Sue Jones with questions.

Hat & Mittens Collection – we are collecting hats, mittens, scarves, and gloves for children in need. The trees are up and in the back of the Welcome Center around the elevator.



Jesus' Sermon - continued from page 2.

Through the Gospel accounts, Jesus tells us that if we stay closely connected to him through his Word and Spirit, we will come to see a new purpose and perspective on even our most difficult experiences.

In the *NIV Application Bible* notes, we read later in Matthew 5, “The Beatitudes are expressions of Spirit-produced kingdom life, revealing to the entire world that a transformation of creation is beginning in Jesus’ disciples. That is why we are blessed if we are his disciples.”

The *NIV Study Bible* both explains and foreshadows what these Beatitudes call the believer to do when it states in its notes on this same chapter: “As God’s reign is established in this world, its effects will be life-changing for those who most need mercy and justice and for all those who share in Jesus’ ministry of the same.”

Salt and Light: Matthew 5:13–16

As we share in Jesus’ ministry, we do so most effectively by remaining connected to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. That is the only way we can pursue a life of Christlikeness with integrity.

Jesus declared in Matthew 5:13 and 14, “You are the salt of the earth,” and “You are the light of the world.” Jesus uses these words as a call to mission and action.

In the ancient world, salt was used as a flavor enhancer and as a preservative. As Christians, we are called to be bearers of “salt” to those around us, to help them understand how the teachings of Jesus both preserve life and enhance the experience of believers in this life and the next. When we read “If the salt loses its saltiness,” we may question how that would even be possible. The *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Bible* instructs us here: “Jesus compares a disciple who does not live according to the values of the kingdom with unsalty salt—salt that cannot fulfill its purpose.”

Jesus also says believers are the light of the world. However, he also used this language to describe himself in the book of John: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). If Jesus is the Light that chases away the pervasive darkness of the world, how can we, imperfect humans that we are—we who make mistakes and sin, both intentionally and unintentionally—imitate him?

Jesus explains: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Believers are called to shine the light of Christ through their words and actions. This means engaging the world like Jesus did: understanding the truth of God’s Word, having mercy, acting justly, and sharing the hope that Jesus has called us to proclaim.

Love for Enemies: Matthew 5:43–48

Again, Jesus turns the wisdom of the world on its head when he instructs us, “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:44–45). When we follow this teaching, we exemplify a trust and reliance on the goodness of God and the wisdom of his plan for the life of every believer.

This doesn’t mean we ignore wrongdoing, but it does mean we respond with grace instead of vengeance. For Christians today, this might look like showing patience in heated debates, choosing forgiveness over retaliation, or extending kindness to someone who has wronged us. By loving our enemies, we reflect the love God has shown us in Christ.

The apostle Paul spoke to this issue when he wrote, “If, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Romans 5:10). Jesus died for humanity even when people were living in outright rebellion against God and his principles. Still today, he welcomes into a relationship with himself everyone who comes to him in repentance and faith. Jesus is calling us to imitate him in our lives today, so that all can see the light of forgiveness that shines through us into the lives of others.

The Power and Position of Prayer: Matthew 6:5–15

In Matthew 6:5–15 we find Jesus’ timeless instruction on prayer. He encourages those who come to God to be humble and private. The *NIV Grace and Truth Study Bible* explains that “at set times of prayer, devout Jews would stop what they were doing and pray—some discretely but others with pretentious display.” Jesus is encouraging his followers to develop a relationship with God, not to put on a show to feel important before other people.

Jesus goes on to give his followers a model prayer to emulate when approaching the Father (v. 9–13). Before he starts, he reminds us, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (v. 8). So we pray, not simply to inform God of what is happening in our lives, but rather to commune and connect with him. Jesus says:

This, then, is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through this beautiful example, our Lord Jesus invites “his disciples to share in his prayer life...In the new community of faith, Jesus’ disciples can pray to God as their Father.” The things he points to, the things that will show our dependence and reliance on God, are simple:

First, we declare that the Lord reigns from heaven and is holy.

Next, we ask that his kingdom be built in our world and exemplified in our lives, with all the priorities of heaven foremost in our minds and hearts.

Then we thank God for his provision, understanding that even our very breath and bread are nothing less than a divine gift from him to us.

Next, we position ourselves under his judgment—as debtors with a load of sin that can only be forgiven by a gracious and all-seeing God. With this, we also declare that, as we have been forgiven by God, so we will also forgive others who wrong us.

Finally, we ask for his protection from temptation and the evil one, which is a call to help us understand how far our sinful nature has taken us away from him, and how merciful he is to call us back to himself. As we declare our dependence on God's great mercy through this simple prayer, we acknowledge his control over every aspect of our lives.

Do Not Worry: Matthew 6:25–34

Later in Matthew 6, we hear a call from Jesus that connects directly with his teaching on prayer. It tells us not to worry or be afraid:

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:31–34).

Imagine how living a life more connected to Jesus through the Spirit he has given to believers can comfort the heart of a person who is consumed with anxiety! These words speak to us over the centuries and acknowledge our desperate need to rely on God and his provision every single day of our lives.

When he spoke these words, our all-knowing Jesus could see into the hearts of the people he created. He knew then, and he knows now, all of the anxieties of the lives lived by the inhabitants of this world. In the face of this, his reminder is one that is beautifully simple: “*Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*” (Matthew 6:27). The obvious answer is “no”; inherent in this question is a call to the believer to rely only on God.

Ask, Seek, Knock: Matthew 7:7–12

Jesus both calls and encourages us in a powerful way when he says,

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8).

What a statement. And what a promise for Spirit-empowered worship and praise of our God through prayer. When we pray according to the values expressed in Jesus’ earlier teaching in Matthew 6:5–15, we understand that he will hear us. When we ask, we will receive answers based on his will in our lives. That’s when the upside-down values of the kingdom will find their fruit.

Jesus offers to answer. Are you knocking?

A Kingdom Vision for Today

The Sermon on the Mount isn’t an ancient relic or an unreachable ideal. It is a living word that calls every Christian into a radical way of life shaped by Jesus’ Kingdom. In a culture marked by division, anxiety, and self-promotion, Jesus points us to humility, love, trust, and obedience.

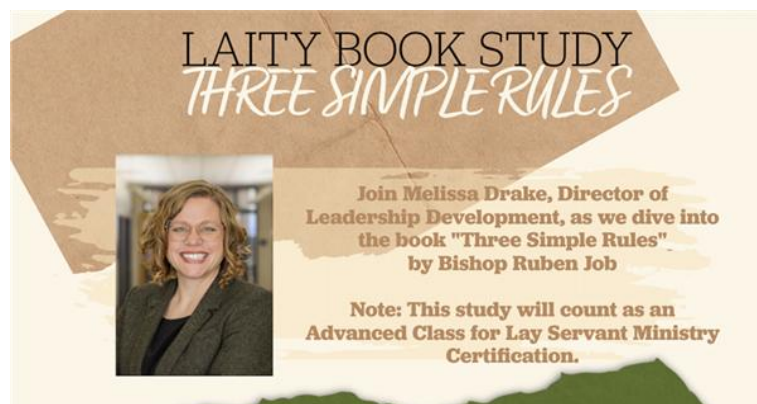
For Christians today, living out the Sermon on the Mount means allowing Christ’s teaching to transform our hearts and direct our actions. It means embodying Kingdom values in everyday situations—at home, at work, online, and in our communities. When we do, we become salt and light in a world desperate for truth and hope, pointing others to the One who fulfills the law, loves unconditionally, and offers a life enduringly built on the only solid foundation.

The *NIV Application Bible* encourages us,

“As the disciple continues to respond obediently to the word of God taught and preached by Jesus and energized by the Spirit, the newly transformed heart directs the transformation of the person from the inside to the outside. The indwelling Spirit directs the renewing of the mind, the disciplining of the body, and the purifying of social relations so that the disciple says yes to God with his or her entire person. The disciple bears the fruit of the Spirit in a life given to God that is being transformed to be like Jesus.”

When we endeavor to be like Jesus, we are as salt and light, bringing illumination, purpose, hope, and peace to our families and friends. And in so doing, we reinforce the same in our own lives.

Adapted from the study material from the *NIV Application Bible* based on the *NIV Application Commentary* series. *NIV Weekly Blog*. All Rights Reserved
501 Nelson Place, Nashville, TN 37214, USA, November 17, 2025.



Join Melissa Drake, Director of Leadership Development and Spiritual Formation, for a Laity Book Study.

We are diving into the book "Three Simple Rules" by Bishop Ruben Job. We will intentionally practice this transformational way of living in the Methodist Movement that grounds us in our faith and roots us in our relationships with self, others, and God. This is a great opportunity to meet other laity within the

Conference and grow in your own faith journey.

When: Monday Nights 6:30 pm -7:30 pm beginning January 5th through February 9th

Where: Zoom link to join from home or wherever life takes you

What do you need:

- Book: "Three Simple Rules for Christian Living" by Jeanne Torrence Finley, Bishop Rueben P. Job - [Find it here.](https://bit.ly/4i6WKiT) (https://bit.ly/4i6WKiT)
- Participant Guide: "Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living" by Bishop Rueben P. Job - [Find it here.](https://bit.ly/44j3gNR) (https://bit.ly/44j3gNR)

Registration: Click [HERE](https://bit.ly/4rlsG7E) (https://bit.ly/4rlsG7E)

Please email [Melissa Drake](#) with questions.

Advent is a significant season in the Christian liturgical calendar that marks the anticipation and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. It is a time of reflection and prayer when individuals and communities prepare their hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. In the Western Christian tradition, Advent lasts for four weeks, beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and culminating on Christmas Eve.



WHAT IS ADVENT?

In the context of Christianity, Advent refers to the season of anticipation both of the celebration of Christ's first coming in Bethlehem, celebrated at Christmas, as well as the hopeful expectation of his return at the end of time.

During this season — which actually marks the beginning of the liturgical year, rather than the end — Christians around the world engage in various traditions and practices that enhance their spiritual preparation.

THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF ADVENT

The concept of Advent likely dates back to the fourth century, although its exact origins are somewhat unclear. It is believed to have been established by early Christians in anticipation of the celebration of Christ's nativity. Initially, Advent was a period of fasting, similar to Lent, focusing on penitence and preparation for the Feast of the Nativity.

Over the centuries, at least in the West, Advent evolved into a more joyful season of expectation and hope, with the emphasis shifting from penance to a joyous anticipation of the coming of Christ.

The season was officially recognized in the Roman Catholic Church from the sixth century onwards, and it has since been adopted by many other Christian denominations.

WHAT DOES ADVENT MEAN?

The term “Advent” originates from a Latin root meaning “arrival” or “coming.”

Each week of Advent corresponds to a particular theme of hope, peace, joy, and love, aligning with the liturgical readings and prayers of the season. This framework helps Christians reflect on the significance of Christ's birth, his ministry, and his promise to return.

The Advent season encourages believers to delve into their faith, foster a greater awareness of God's presence in their lives, and cultivate a spirit of gratitude and generosity as they prepare for Christmas.

WHEN DOES ADVENT START?

Advent begins each year on the Sunday nearest to November 30, which is the feast day of St. Andrew. The exact date varies each year. In 2025, Advent starts on Sunday, November 30.

The season spans four Sundays, culminating on Christmas Eve, leading into the joyous celebration of Christmas.

- First Sunday of Advent: November 30, 2025
- Second Sunday of Advent: December 7, 2025
- Third Sunday of Advent: December 14, 2025
- Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 21, 2025

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ADVENT

The significance of Advent lies in its invitation — in the midst of the busyness and sometimes chaos of the holidays — to pause, reflect, and prepare oneself spiritually for the arrival of Jesus.

It is a time for believers to examine their hearts, seek forgiveness, and prepare for the joy of Christmas with open spirits. The themes that accompany each week of this season serve to realign priorities, nourish faith, and create a sense of community as families and congregations come together in celebration.

By embracing the reflective nature of Advent, Christians can experience personal and collective renewal, leading to a more meaningful celebration of Christmas.

HOW IS ADVENT CELEBRATED?

Advent is celebrated in various ways across different Christian traditions. Common practices include the lighting of candles on an Advent wreath, attendance at church services, and daily prayer and Scripture readings.

WHAT DOES THE ADVENT WREATH SYMBOLIZE?

An Advent wreath is a circular arrangement of greenery that, through its shape, signifies the eternal nature of God's love and the promise of everlasting life through Christ, while the greenery symbolizes the renewal of life and hope.

The use of Advent candles is a prominent tradition that symbolizes the themes of the season. Generally, one candle is lit each week leading up to Christmas. The most common arrangement features four candles placed in a circular wreath, representing the four Sundays of Advent, with an additional candle in the center called the Christ candle, which is lit on Christmas Eve.

Each candle, lit progressively each week, reinforces the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, allowing believers to engage in a visual and meaningful way with the spiritual aspects of the Advent season. Lighting each candle can become a cherished family tradition and a focal point for prayers and reflections during Advent.

WHAT ARE THE 4 THEMES OF ADVENT?

Advent encompasses four main themes, each representing a crucial aspect of the spiritual journey leading up to Christmas. Each of the four Sundays of Advent corresponds to:

1. Hope: The first theme of Advent emphasizes the hope Christians have in the coming of Christ, reminiscent of the anticipation of the Messiah in the Old Testament.
2. Peace: The second theme reflects on the peace Christ brings into the world, reminding believers to seek inner peace and foster peace with other people.

3. Joy: The third theme centers on the joy of the season, celebrating the birth of Christ and the joy found in Christian community and fellowship.
4. Love: The final theme represents the selfless love of God, encouraging believers to embody love in their lives and relationships.

Let's look at each week.

THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

The first week of Advent centers on the theme of hope, and is marked by the lighting of the first candle on the Advent wreath, often called the "Prophecy Candle." In this initial week, Christians reflect on the prophecies of the coming Messiah and the hope that these biblical messages inspire in their faith.

This week encourages believers to contemplate their spiritual journey, consider their role in spreading hope, and prepare their hearts for the joy of Christmas. It serves as a reminder of the anticipation felt by those who awaited the birth of Christ thousands of years ago.

THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

The second week of Advent centers on the theme of peace. The second candle, often referred to as the "Bethlehem Candle," is lit to symbolize the peace that Christ brings to the world. This week encourages believers to reflect on the idea of peace in their lives and communities.

The focus during the second week is not only on the peace of Christ but also on how individuals can contribute to peace in their surroundings, promote reconciliation, and foster understanding and compassion toward others.

THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

The third week of the season is characterized by joy. The third candle lit during this week is usually pink, signifying the joy that comes from the nearing celebration of Christmas. Often referred to as the "Shepherd's Candle," it emphasizes the joy announced by the angels at Jesus' birth. In many Western churches, particularly the Catholic Church, this Sunday is known as Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for "rejoice."

This week serves as a vibrant reminder for Christians to experience and share joy amidst life's challenges and to celebrate the joyous message of the gospel. It encourages believers to find delight not only in the festivities of Christmas but also in the life and teachings of Jesus.

THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

The fourth Sunday of Advent occurs in the last week before Christmas, symbolizing love. The fourth candle, typically referred to as the "Angels' Candle," reminds Christians of God's profound love for humanity, which is demonstrated through the gift of Jesus. This week focuses on serving and loving others as an expression of gratitude for the love received from God.

Believers are called to reflect on how they can show love in practical ways during this Advent season. This fourth Sunday tradition emphasizes the importance of relationships and community, urging individuals to seek out opportunities to demonstrate love and kindness.

WHAT COLOR ARE ADVENT CANDLES?

The colors of the Advent candles hold special significance, typically reflecting the themes of the season. There are four traditional colors used in the Advent candles:

- Purple: Symbolizing hope, peace, and penitence, this color is used for the first, second, and fourth candles.
- Pink: Used for the third candle, it represents joy and signifies the celebration of Christ's coming.
- White: Often the color of the Christ candle, it symbolizes purity and represents the light of Christ entering the world.

WHAT ARE ADVENT DEVOTIONALS?

Advent devotionals are tools that can help individuals and families engage more deeply with the themes and messages of the Advent season. Advent devotionals typically include scripture passages related to the aforementioned themes, along with prayers, reflections, and sometimes songs or prompts for meditation, to help us focus on these key aspects of the season. The purpose is to spiritually prepare for Christmas, while also keeping the broader message of preparation for Christ's second coming in mind.

Many churches and Christian organizations produce Advent devotionals that can be used at home or in community settings. They serve as a meaningful way to reflect on the significance of the season and to intentionally prepare one's heart for the celebration of Christmas.

WHAT IS AN ADVENT CALENDAR?

An Advent calendar is a special calendar used to count down the days of Advent, often featuring 24 compartments or doors, one for each day from December 1 to December 24. Advent calendars are a delightful tradition for children and families, helping to build excitement and anticipation for Christmas.

Each day, a door is opened to reveal a surprise, such as a chocolate, a small toy, or a Scripture verse. Some families also create custom Advent calendars that incorporate religious themes, activities, or acts of service, reinforcing the spiritual significance of the season.

Through the use of an Advent calendar, families can integrate fun and faith, making each day a part of their journey toward Christmas.



Dear Church Family,

As we move toward Thanksgiving, our hearts turn naturally toward gratitude, family, and the simple joys that give color to our daily lives. In 1 John 1:1–10, the writer reminds us that true joy begins with fellowship with God and with one another. “We are writing these things,” he says, “so that our joy may be complete.” Joy, in other words, is not something we manufacture; it’s something we share.

John points us to the God who steps into our world with real flesh, real struggles, and real life to bring light where darkness has settled. As we walk in that light, we discover a joy that does not depend on perfect circumstances. It grows through honest relationships, through forgiveness offered and received, through the grace that meets us when we fall short.

As Thanksgiving approaches, may we prepare not only our tables but also our hearts. Let the light of Christ guide our gratitude. Let joy rise in us as we remember God’s presence, God’s mercy, and the gift of being part of a community shaped by love.

This week, may your preparations be filled with small graces, warm connections, and a joy that runs deeper than the season.

Grace and peace,
Pastor David Clark, 308-258-7749 (cell)

Room at the Table

You are invited to be their guest for a free Thanksgiving Dinner.

Date & Time: Wednesday, November 26, 2025, serving from **5-6 p.m.**

Location: First Presbyterian Church, 200 W. Clarinda Ave.

Host & Joining Churches:

- **Host:** First Presbyterian Church
- **Joining:** St. Joh’s Episcopal Church, Community of Christ Church, Lutheran Emmanuel Church, and UCC Congregational Church

Cost & Reservations: The dinner is **FREE**, and **no reservations** are needed.

What to Expect: A Thanksgiving meal, fellowship, and music.

