



# Weekly Booster

## CHURCH STAFF

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David B. Clark

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### Office Manager

Jeff Hiser

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### Pianist

Terry Stafford

## Bells & Choir Directors

Dan & Linnea Shook

## Multimedia & Website

Jeff Hiser

## Sunday Media Booth

Alan Hutchison

Jeff Hiser

## 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.*



## Living Out the Greatest Commandment

In the heart of the Gospels, we find a profound and beautifully simple instruction from Jesus.

When asked about which of God's commandments was the most important, he offered a two-part answer that has echoed through centuries: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

This teaching, found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, isn't just a lofty ideal; it's a practical blueprint for a meaningful life. But what does it actually mean to live this out today, in a world of deadlines, digital distractions, and complex social challenges? How do we translate this ancient wisdom into tangible actions, attitudes, and decisions?

## The Context of the Question

The Jewish leaders who asked Jesus this question were experts in the 613 laws of the Old Testament, and debates over which categories or practices were most important were common. Jesus' response, however, cut through centuries of legal debate with divine clarity and simplicity.

*Continued on page 2*

*"Individual commitment to a group effort-that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.*  
Vince Lombardi

*"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."* Henry Ford

### Reminders

#### December 7<sup>th</sup>

Sunday Service 9:00 a.m.  
PK-6 S.S. during the message  
Jr/Sr High S.S. – 10:30 a.m.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Communion Sunday

#### December 9<sup>th</sup>

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

#### December 10<sup>th</sup>

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

#### December 11<sup>th</sup>

T.O.P.S.

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

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

### Greatest Commandment - continued from page 1.

As recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus provided an answer that stands as the very core of the Christian faith. Let's take a look at the contexts of these three Gospel accounts.

Matthew 22:34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

In this instance, the Pharisees got together to try to show their superiority over their Jewish brothers, the Sadducees, who represented a smaller group of religious devotees. Though the two groups disagreed on many theological details surrounding traditional Jewish Law, here both the Pharisees and Sadducees banded together to publicly test Jesus' adherence to that Law. Jesus answered satisfactorily in this regard, and Matthew records Jesus testing the Pharisees with other questions that proved Jesus' comprehensive understanding of Jewish Law (see Matthew 22:41-46).

Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him."

*Continued on page 9*



## 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 7<sup>th</sup>.  
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.



Where did Elijah kill the  
prophets of Baal?

- a) Mount Ebal
- b) Temple garden
- c) Brook Kishon
- d) Land of Shinar

How old was Eli when he  
died?

- a) 65 yrs old
- b) 73 yrs old
- c) 98 yrs old
- d) 110 yrs old

How old was Jacob when he  
stood before Pharaoh?

- a) 110 yrs old
- b) 130 yrs old
- c) 150 yrs old
- d) 170 yrs old

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



7<sup>th</sup> – Jim Baldwin

8<sup>th</sup> – Emma Robison

13<sup>th</sup> – Don Rorebeck, Linnea Shook

**\*\*See a wrong birthday or anniversary, or need one added? Please call  
the office or send an email to [office@shen.church](mailto:office@shen.church)**

**Shenandoah First United  
Methodist Church**

200 Church St.  
Shenandoah, IA 51601

Phone 712-246-2081

Church E-mail  
[office@shen.church](mailto: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**

## **“Peace in Beyond Understanding”**

**Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

### Songs

*Angels from the Realms of Glory #220*  
*O Come, O Come Emmanuel #211*  
*Thou Long-Expected Jesus #196*

### Last Week's Attendance

**In-Person Worship – 48**  
**Online Worship – 17**

### *Our Vision:*

***“Growing as disciples of Jesus while connecting with others and serving our community.”***

*Answers for Nov 30<sup>th</sup> are d) Righteousness a) time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord a) Absalom*  
*Quiz hints – Q1) 1 Kings Q 2) 1 Samuel Q3) Genesis*



**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*



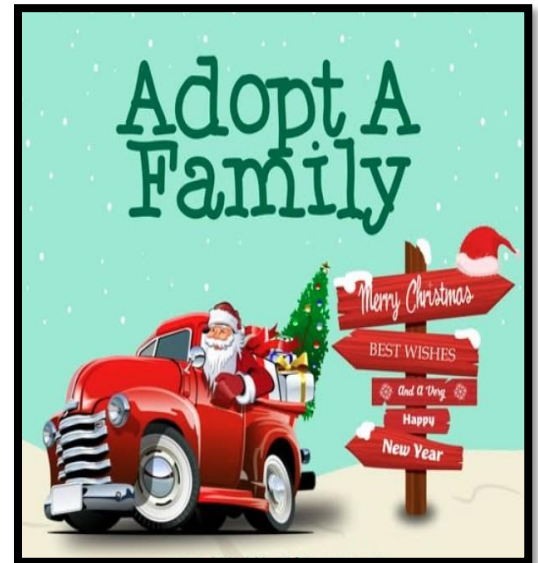
*Each of you should GIVE what you have decided in YOUR HEART to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES a cheerful GIVER." (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

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 **Heifer Internationsl**.

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.

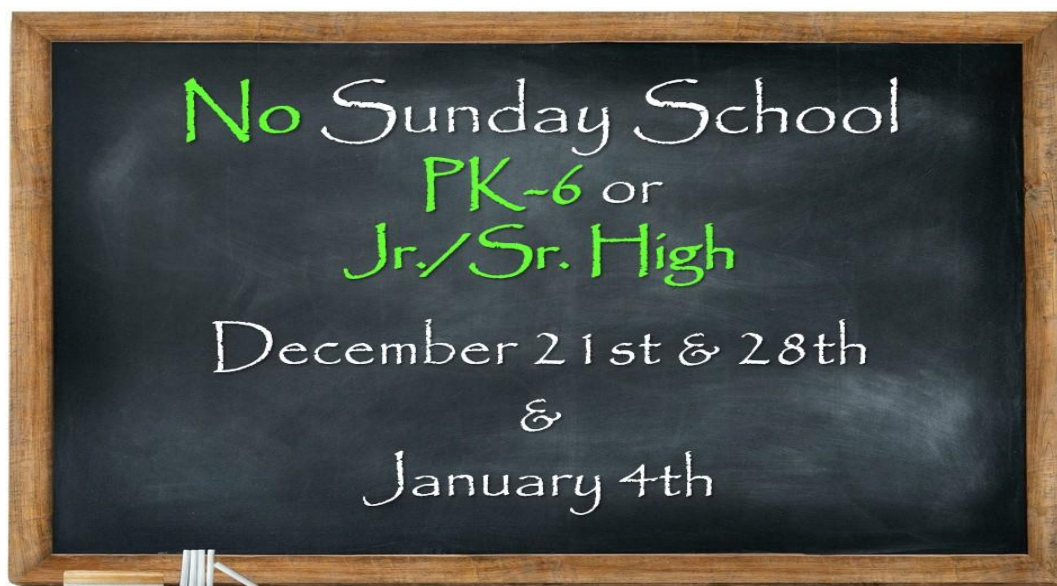


Over 33 years ago, there was a dream of all community families having a happy and healthy holiday, and through some brainstorming, the **Adopt-A-Family** project began. Our church will provide a local family in need with a brighter holiday with gifts appropriate for their age or need. No adult information 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.



If you would like to participate in caroling on December 14<sup>th</sup>, sign your name and how many in your group. You will find the sign up sheet on the Welcome Center counter.

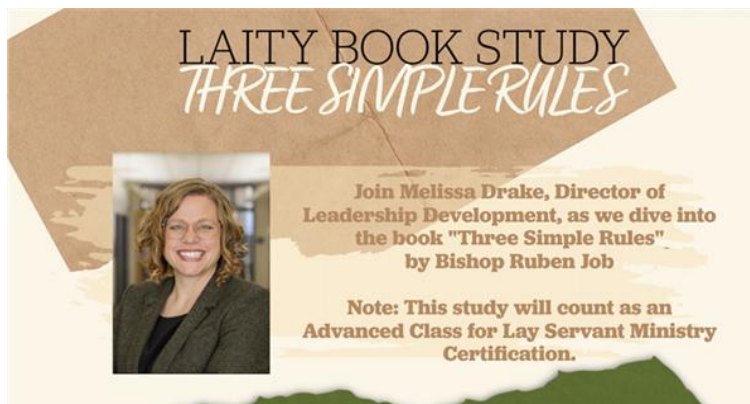
Also, there is a sign-up sheet with items that are needed for the soup supper once caroling has finished. Please take a look at the list to see if there is something you can volunteer to bring after caroling.



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. **There are still five girls (12-16 yrs) and one boy (13 yrs) on the list.** If you plan to purchase for one of the children, please bring the gift to the church by December 14<sup>th</sup>. 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.



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.



**Greatest Commandment - continued from page 2.**

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Note that in this account, after Jesus gives the correct answer, the learned Law expert expands on Jesus’ testimony. Then the tester becomes the one being evaluated as Jesus confirms his statement, but at the same time asserts his divine authority. In saying that the legal expert was “not far from the kingdom of God,” Jesus implied that he had a categorical and complete understanding of what was involved in conforming to and being a part of the idea of the larger kingdom of God.

In each of these first two Gospel accounts, we see that Jesus’ answer didn’t provide any new information; the legal experts and those listening understood that Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. But by linking them together, Jesus revealed the heart of God’s intention for humanity. Critical aspects of Scriptural teaching, from the laws governing worship to the commands for social justice, hang on these two principles: loving God completely and loving others sacrificially.

Jesus’ own sacrifice exemplifies the selfless love that he intends for us to emulate, and Jesus’ statements and actions give us important insight into the countercultural realities of the kingdom of God (see also Matthew 5).

Luke 10:25-37

Speaking of countercultural realities, Luke’s faithful account comes with an expanded explanation by Jesus in the matter under debate. It’s in this Gospel that we find the beloved story of the Good Samaritan, which applies these greatest commandments in a very personal way:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

In challenging his questioner with this story, Jesus expanded and explained what he meant when he quoted the teachings from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. His evident authority to speak about these matters shut down any further public questioning, as we see at the end of the passage in Mark. This same story has for centuries challenged believers to set aside their religious rules and pride to see and respond to the humanity in those who are suffering.

That’s putting real, human flesh on what it means to follow these two most important ancient commands.

### **The Central Mission: Loving God with Heart, Soul, and Mind**

For those of us who are believers, understanding and applying this two-fold commandment is not just a good idea—it is the central mission of our lives. But what does it truly mean to love God with everything we are? Let’s take a look at the three interconnected parts that Jesus involved here: heart, soul, and mind.

*Loving God with all one’s heart* refers to the core of our being—our emotions, desires, and will. It means that our deepest affections are reserved for him. In a world full of idols that compete for our devotion—career success, material possessions, relationships, even Christian ministry itself—loving God with our whole heart means that he holds the supreme place. This is a conscious choice we make daily. As the psalmist wrote, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25). It’s living out the idea of abiding with God every second of one’s day. It’s about finding the discipline to orient our entire being toward him, seeking his will above our own on a consistent, daily basis.

*Loving God with all one’s soul* speaks to our life, our very breath, and the unique essence of who we are. It’s about dedicating our individual personality, talents, and energy to his service. This love is not

passive; it is an active, living devotion. It means our life is a testimony to his goodness. We live in a way that honors him whether we are at work, at home, or in fellowship with other believers. Our life becomes an act of worship, demonstrating our gratitude for the salvation we have received through Christ.

*Loving God with all one's mind* involves our intellect, thoughts, and understanding. This command helps us to engage with God thoughtfully and intentionally. It means studying his Word, wrestling with deep theological truths, and taking "captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). We are not called to a blind faith, but to a reasoned one grounded in the truth of Scripture. This love moves us to know God more deeply, to understand his character, and to meditate on his works both in the larger world and in our personal experiences of his care and guidance. Becoming a student of God's kingdom guards our minds against false doctrines and worldly philosophies that may undermine our faith.

### **Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself**

Jesus didn't stop with our vertical relationship with God. He immediately connected it to our horizontal relationships with others. The second commandment points us toward our neighbors: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

This isn't an afterthought; it's the necessary expression of our love for God. The apostle John makes this connection explicit: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

Our love for our neighbors is the living out of our love for God. But who is our neighbor? In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Jesus expands the definition to include anyone we encounter who is in need, regardless of their background, beliefs, or social standing. Even if their practices stand in direct opposition to our belief standards, we are commanded to "go and do likewise." In so doing, we communicate the love of God to a dark world that so desperately needs his light.

Loving our neighbor "as yourself" sets a high standard. It means we should desire for others the same good things we desire for ourselves: safety, provision, respect, and compassion. Practically, this love takes many forms. It can mean providing a meal for a struggling family, listening to a friend in distress, sharing the gospel with a coworker, or making a public stand for righteousness and justice in our communities. In its essence, it means treating others with the dignity they possess as people made in the image of God.

This love is often sacrificial. It requires us to set aside our own comfort, time, and resources for the good of someone else. It is the kind of love Jesus modeled perfectly when he laid down his life for us, his enemies, so that we might become his friends and claim our rightful place as children of the living God.



## The Centrality of Jesus

The *NIV Application Bible*'s notes on the passage from Matthew further explain how we can apply these greatest commandments to our own lives.

These dual truths [Loving God and loving others] lie at the center of Christian claims. If Jesus is truly the one whom he declares himself to be, we have a unique message to proclaim. Jesus is unlike any figure ever to walk the earth, for he is not simply a messenger but the Son of God. The religious leaders' silence is outspoken testimony that the implication of the text cannot be avoided: The Messiah has a special relationship to Yahweh, which Jesus claims for himself. Their silence is also outspoken testimony of their own avoidance of the implications of this reality for themselves. Jesus demands nothing less from all of us than to be accepted, served, and worshiped as our Lord.

Amen. Yes, Jesus stands at the center of this ancient command. He is the one to whom we direct the commitment of our hearts, souls, and minds. Through these passages, we come to understand that the Greatest Commandment is not a suggestion; it is the blueprint for a life that glorifies God. It is both simple enough for a child to understand and deep enough to explore for a lifetime.

Let us continually examine our lives and ask: Am I loving God with my whole being? And is that love overflowing into a genuine, active love for my neighbor? When we commit to living out this truth, we fulfill the very purpose for which we were created.

*Adapted from the author and senior editor with the Zondervan Bible Group, Mike Vander Klipp. NIV Weekly Blog. All Rights Reserved 501 Nelson Place, Nashville, TN 37214, USA, December 1, 2025.*

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### Accept God's invitation to a peaceful Advent

Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of Jesus. It can be a deeply meaningful, holy season if we allow space for reflection and time with God.

But Advent can be complicated. Some are grieving the loss of past holiday joy. Others are feeling guilty about their crowded calendar and not having enough time for the “real reason for the season.”

Whether you are an Advent enthusiast who wholeheartedly embraces the season and its promises of spiritual growth, or you are simply seeking ways to draw closer to Christ, God is ready to welcome you into a time of hope, peace, joy, and love.

## **Ponder the names of God**

Sometimes it's helpful to focus on a specific Bible verse during a season like Advent. Consider Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'"

In the book And His Name Shall Be Called, The Rev. James Howell unpacks this verse and dives into the ways it can help us make sense of who God really is, as well as what life with God is, and could be, like.

Howell noticed that invitations to quieter spaces were welcomed at Myers Park UMC, where he is senior pastor, and he sought to bring that peaceful experience to the page.

He says, "We need to pause and be silent. Read Scripture slowly and ponder. For example, let's think about this: Wonderful Counselor. Let's just go to wonderful, then wonder. Have we lost our sense of wonder? I think we have.

"Mighty God could be the most important [name for God] in our culture because we're so about might and power, and this Mighty God is unexpected – it's a baby. And then he grows up, and he's on a cross. So it's a different kind of might. And it's the kind of might that we need."

To help yourself stay present during your study and reflection, set aside distracting digital devices and step or look outside. Give thanks for God's creation and take note of frost-covered grass, a singing bird, or a crisp breeze. After a time of silence and tuning into God's voice, listen to uplifting music.

## **Hear the promises of Advent**

Isaiah 9:6 might be familiar because of Handel's Messiah, one of the most-performed and recognized works of classical music. ~~As an avid music lover and musician, Howell embraces this in the book.~~

"Some people say, 'I don't like music,' but it speaks, it works," Howell observes. "I see those who may only come to church on Christmas Eve, but they're singing Silent Night. They're mystically transported to some other place. It's the music we know by heart, and I mean, by heart, as in, you know it, but then also it's deep in the heart.

"Music really matters for all of this. There are music playlists listed in the book that you can listen to. Some are Advent/Christmas songs, some aren't, per se, but if you think of them through that lens, they can be. ... You can listen as you ponder and read the Scripture."

## **Honor God all year long**

While this and many other devotional books are written for particular church seasons, the content is meant to support and inspire readers no matter when they study it. Howell points out that Handel's Messiah was actually composed as an Easter offering.

He encourages, "To be quiet, to pray, to read the Bible, to read a book about the Bible, I think any time we do that, God is honored. And you want to honor God, you want to do God's will. And when you do those things, you are doing God's will."

"I'm trying to frame that in my own mind and for other people. I'd like to do something today that would give God some delight."

*Adapted from the author Laura Buchanan, UNC.org at United Methodist Communications., November 7, 2025.*

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### Christmas Coffee Schedule

**Eiler Senior Living** – will be rescheduled

**Homestead**, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. – Jane Foster

**Accura**, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. – Cathy Shull & Phyllis Scott

If you would like to join others for coffee at the scheduled time listed above, please sign the sign-up sheet on the Welcome Center counter. If you need a ride, please put a start by your name. If you have questions, please call Gloria Mauer at 712-246-8130.

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FOR TO US A CHILD IS BORN ✦ TO US A SON IS GIVEN



# Bethlehem Alive

December 12-13 & 19-21

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS: 7:00 - 8:30 PM

SUNDAY: 2:00 - 3:30 PM



415 N. FREMONT ST.  
SHENANDOAH, IA

EXPERIENCE THE WONDER OF BETHLEHEM  
ON THE NIGHT OF OUR SAVIOR'S BIRTH  
A WALK-THROUGH EVENT FEATURING LIVE GUESTS AND ANIMALS.

 **NISHNA VALLEY**  
Christian Church



Dear Church Family,

In the middle of December, when calendars fill up, routines get disrupted, and even joyful traditions can feel like pressure, Paul's words to the Philippians feel like a deep breath: "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7)

Paul doesn't pretend life is calm. He writes these words from prison. Which is why his invitation feels so honest: "Rejoice... do not worry... pray... give thanks." He's not asking us to ignore our stress; he's giving us practices that make room for God's peace to meet us right in the middle of it.

Here are a few simple ways to practice that peace in a busy December:

1. A 30-Second Pause.

Stop once or twice a day, breathe deeply, and whisper a short prayer: "Lord, hold my heart." Even one deep breath can create enough space for peace to slip in.

2. A Daily Gratitude Note.

Write down one thing each day that brought you joy or comfort; something small, specific, and true. Gratitude warms the heart.

3. Light a Candle in Silence.

Perhaps in the morning or before bed, light a candle and sit for one quiet minute. Let the small flame remind you that God's presence is near, even when days feel crowded.

4. Pray As You Go.

During errands, driving, or chores, offer short, conversational prayers:

"Be with me in this."

"Give me patience."

"Thank you for this moment."

Paul promises that God's peace will guard us, as if peace itself stands watch over our anxious minds, like a gentle sentinel. We don't create this peace; we simply make room for it.

May God's peace, deep and beyond all understanding, meet you and sustain you in this season.

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



The holidays can be beautiful, but they can also be hard. If you're carrying grief, stress, loneliness, or the weight of a difficult season, you're not alone. You are invited to our Blue Christmas Service, a quiet, contemplative time of worship designed to hold space for all who are hurting or simply moving more slowly this year.

We'll gather with soft music, Scripture, prayer, and the lighting of candles as we remember that God meets us in the dark and tender places of life. Come as you are; bring your sadness, your questions, your memories, and your hope.

Date: Tues, December 16

Location: Shenandoah, First UMC Chapel

Time: 5:30pm

No matter what this season holds for you, there is room for you here.