



# Weekly Booster

## CHURCH STAFF

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Craig Harris,

## Facebook Contributors

Pastor David B. Clark,

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## Sunday Praise Team

Terry Stafford, Linda Haldane,

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Jeff Hiser, Drew Morelock,

Pastor David



## Preparing for Christmas: Tips for keeping the holiday season holy

"Are you ready for Christmas?" Whenever someone asks that question, heart rates accelerate as we remember all the things yet to do. However, if we think about Advent a little differently, our "getting ready" can be more of a holy time.

### **Worship and devotion**

**Worship with your church.** Your congregation may hold special services throughout the Christmas season. In addition to Sunday worship and Christmas Eve services, plan to attend the children's Christmas pageant, the choir concert, and the Longest Night/Blue Christmas services. If you do not have a regular congregation with whom you worship, find one near you using Find-A-Church.

**Worship with your family.** Light the candles of an Advent wreath each Sunday night to help everyone in the family prepare for Jesus' birth. Discipleship Ministries has produced a guide for Advent family devotions that includes things to do or think about each day leading up to Christmas.

**Private devotions.** Spending time alone with God can be a great way to draw closer. Upper Room Ministries publishes devotions every day of the year that offer a scripture reading, a devotional thought, and a prayer.

*Continued page 2.*

Quote

*“I learned a long time ago that worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere.”  
National Lampoon's Van Wilder*

## Reminders

December 23<sup>rd</sup>

Men's Bible Study – 8:00 a.m.

December 24<sup>th</sup>

Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Morning Service – 9:00 a.m.  
Christmas Eve Service – 7:00 a.m.

December 25<sup>th</sup>

Church Office Closed

December 27<sup>th</sup>

Bible Study – 11:00 a.m.  
Praise Team - 5:00 p.m.  
Choir – 5:30 p.m.  
Bell Choir – 6:30 p.m.

December 28<sup>th</sup>

T.O.P.S.

\*\*Worship Assistant is needed for  
December 31<sup>st</sup> & January

\*\* Fellowship Volunteers needed  
sign-up in Fellowship Hall



Two Volunteers Needed each Thursday  
to Deliver Meals  
Sign-Up Sheet is on the  
Welcome Center Counter

**Preparing - Continued from page 1.**

UMC.org offers some that help us make room in our lives for Christmas, others ask us to color as we reflect, and some others use the words of hymns to inspire us.

**Take the Advent Quiz** <https://bit.ly/483vPPa> Whether you answer correctly or not, you will find fascinating things to read or watch to help you in your celebration of the season.

**Decorating and baking**

**Pray through your decorating.** Many of our Christmas decorations have religious significance. The wreath is round, reminding us of the constancy of God. The Christmas tree is an evergreen, a reminder that God's promises never fail. Even the lights can serve as reminders that Jesus is the light of the world! Not to mention the nativity scene on the coffee table and the angels on the special Christmas party napkins. Whether decorating yourself or enjoying others' displays, let the images spur you to prayers of gratitude.

**Bake extra.** When baking for guests, the cookie swap, or to give as gifts, take a few extra moments and make one more batch to give away. Then visit the local homeless shelter, food bank, first responders, or others with whom you want to share.

**Remember.** These preparations are sometimes filled with memories—ornaments from our childhood Christmas tree, recipes you first learned from your grandmother, and more. Take the time to savor the memories and give thanks to the saints who have lived before you.

**Education**

**Join a Sunday school class or Bible study.** Many United Methodist congregations will offer special Advent education opportunities. These are wonderful times to learn something new and to connect with others who are getting their souls ready for the coming of Christ.

**Study the Bible.** The story of God coming to us in the person of Jesus—the incarnation—is central to our Christian faith, and a favorite topic of John Wesley. Get a good, devotional Bible study guide and delve into the meaning of Christmas from a new angle.

*Continued page 5.*

Quote

*“You want to get out of the hole? First, you’re going to have to put down the shovel” Incredibles*

**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 Office Hours**

**\*\* Children & Jr.-Sr. High  
Sunday School – PK-6  
during service, Jr/Sr High  
at 10:30 a.m.**

**\*\*Choir – Wednesdays,  
5:30 p.m. Sunday 8:30 a.m.  
\*\*Bell Choir –  
Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.**

The front door to the church  
will be unlocked during  
office hours and closed only  
for errands and lunch.

**Monday**  
9:00-11:00  
12:00-3:00  
**Tuesday**  
9:00-11:00  
12:00-3:00  
**Wednesday**  
**CLOSED**  
**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 in 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 the next  
business day.



How many pieces of  
silver did Judas get for  
delivering Jesus?

- a) 20
- b) 30
- c) 40
- d) 50

Who had to wash seven times  
to be cured?

- a) Asa
- b) Bartimaeus
- c) Naaman
- d) Lazarus

Where did Abraham bury his  
wife, Sarah?

- a) Mountain Damascus
- b) Egyptian land
- c) Field of Machpelah
- d) Amorian land

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



24<sup>th</sup> – Dixie Dailey  
26<sup>th</sup> – Marcia Allely  
28<sup>th</sup> – Becky Ashenfelter

**\*\*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**

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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**

**Call to Worship**

**Leader: Brothers, sisters, siblings: Draw near with a genuine heart.**

**People: We are gathered in this sacred place by the love of Jesus.**

**L: We have been provoked in many ways.**

**P: We have been judged, persecuted, hurt, confused, and broken.**

**L: But God looks with favor on the lowly and for that we give glory!**

**P: So let us provoke one another to love.**

**L: As the people of God, love defines who we are.**

**P: Our love of God, our love of neighbor, our love for ourselves.**

**“Unrelenting Love”**

**Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:23-25**

**Songs**

**Angels from the Realms of Glory v.1-4 #220**

**Love Divine, All Loves Excelling v.1-3 #384**

**What Child Is This v.1—3 #219**

**Joy to the World v.1,2,4 #246**

**Last Week's Attendance**

**In-Person Worship – 126**

**On-Line Worship – 16**

**Our Mission:**

**“Know & Serve God by Sharing Christ's Love.”**

**Our Vision:**

**“We will grow in holiness, our community will thrive, & we will make a difference in our world.”**

**Answers for Dec 17<sup>th</sup> are c) true child in faith b) King's treasury b) Laban  
Quiz hints – Q1) Matthew Q2) 2 Kings Q3) Genesis**

**Preparing - Continued from page 2.**

**Read a book.** Maybe you have always wanted to know more about the theology of the incarnation or have always wanted to re-read Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Set aside some time every day to dive into a good book just for fun, or to learn something about Christmas.

**Giving**

**Give time.** Find a mission that your congregation supports, or a neighbor who needs a hand, and make a gift of your time. You might shovel snow, drive to doctor's appointments, work at the soup kitchen, or take a meal over once a week.

**Give money.** UMCOR also has some great ways to give gifts that will help others in amazing ways. Your donation to UMCOR can be designated toward specific projects in a series of categories that include things like hunger and poverty, water and sanitation, education, and health ministries. Also, continue to support the ministries and missions of your United Methodist congregation.

**Celebrate**

**Sing.** Christmas music is everywhere. Join in the song.

**Be creative.** Write a poem or song. Paint. Create a collage. Crochet. Work with wood. Use your talents and abilities in celebration of the season and thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus.

**Throw a party!** Children love birthday parties, so have your kids invite some of their friends to your house for a birthday party for Jesus during winter break. Play games, and have some cake and ice cream. Mix birthday and Christmas traditions. Or invite friends over to celebrate Las Posadas, remembering that as Jesus has welcomed us, we are to welcome others.

**Enjoy the food.** You may not need to be encouraged for this one, but remember the gift of food—even holiday treats—though not to excess. Let the abundance of good food be a reminder of the provision of God. "Taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psalm 34:8).

**Be kind to yourself.** Sometimes we put a lot of pressure on ourselves during this busy time. Permit yourself to miss a party or two. Choose to be with family, to spend time alone, to see your child's Christmas choir concert at school, and enjoy the season.

*This story was first published November 23, 2015. Some editorial changes have been made and links have been updated for 2022.*

*Article by Joe Lovino, UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. Adapted from the first publication, November 23, 2015. Some editorial changes have been made and updated.*



*“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 also 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 December will go to the Shenandoah Food Pantry.



## **NOISY OFFERING**



## January

Peanut Butter and jelly, Pineapple, Mandarin Oranges, Peaches, Spaghetti Sauce and Spaghetti Noodles, Cake, Brownie, Cookie, and Muffin Mixes, Pancake Mix and Syrup, Sloopy Joe Mix (canned), Soda Crackers, Cereal, Bar Soap, Deodorant.

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 with their food items home. 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.



The PK-6 Sunday School students have been busy decorating bags so they can be placed around the church. They are collecting food for the food pantry to help the holidays a little better for others. Each month we receive a list of food items that the food pantry could use. The congregation has touched so many lives that need assistance and it is a great project for the Sunday School students to be involved in and learn what it means to help others. We are still collecting First Fruits at the beginning of each month.

### When Was Jesus Born?

There's always a great debate about when Jesus was born, specifically what time of the year (although there is also debate about the year itself). It is at this time of the year that many celebrate His birth, but it is unlikely that He was born during the winter months. Our first clue concerning this is that when Jesus was born, Luke's account tells us that an angel delivered this message to shepherds who were out in the field watching their flocks (Luke 2:8-11). Bible scholars and historians tell us that in the Palestinian area, sheep are not kept out in the fields from November through February. Also, it is unlikely that Caesar would have authorized a census where each person had to travel during the winter months when it was so very difficult. History reveals that these were usually done in the spring before planting or in early autumn after the harvest.



But even with all of that uncertainty, I believe I can still give an accurate answer as to when Jesus was born. Ready for it? Here it is: **Jesus was born at the exact right time.** Galatians 4:4-5 reveals, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption..."

God sent His Son to the earth at the precise moment in history, regardless of what year or month it was. Think about it. The Hebrews (through the inspiration of God) had given the Old Testament which through its prophecies pointed to the Messiah. The Greeks, who had formerly been the world power, had created a language for the common man (*koine* Greek) in which the New Testament would be written. The Romans, who were the current ruling power, had built an extensive road system on which the gospel could now easily travel. It was the ideal time for Jesus to come into the world – and thus He did.

Also let's note that even though Jesus could have come in one of many different ways, Galatians 4:4 declares that He came as one born into the human race (to sympathize with us, Hebrews 4:15) and born under the law (to complete it, Matthew 5:17-18). Again, the timing of His birth was exactly right concerning these and every aspect of Jesus' coming to the earth. What we need to remember is that God's timing is always perfect – and we should celebrate that fact on a daily basis!

*Article adapted from author Edd Sterchi, Broadway Church of Christ, Campbellsville, KY. Bulletin Digest, December 2023, Vol. 43, No. 12.*



### Searching for Jesus

One of the verses most heard at this time of the year is found in Luke 2:11, "...for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." And as familiar as this verse is, the immediate reaction to the verse may be more important. "The shepherds began to say to one another, 'Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us'" (Luke 2:15). So, after hearing the "good news" proclaimed, the shepherds searched out the baby to confirm the angelic proclamation.

A similar result is recorded in Matthew 2. The magi from the east had seen the star and came to worship the King of the Jews. When arriving in Jerusalem, they repeatedly asked the location of the King of the Jews. They wanted to know His location so they could worship Him. Herod sent them on the way to Bethlehem to “search carefully for the Child;...” (Mt. 2:1-8).

Two other individuals were spoken of as “looking for the consolation of Israel” and the “redemption of Jerusalem.” They were Simeon and the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:25-38). Both were in their later years of life but longing to see the Messiah.

There is another group of individuals mentioned in the narrative of the visit of the magi that has drawn more of my attention—the chief priests and scribes (the people who should have been attuned to the prophecies of the Messiah and awaiting His coming!). They were quick to respond to Herod and the magi regarding the prophecy of Christ’s birthplace, but Scripture is silent as to whether or not they searched out the Messiah for themselves. Why?

At this time of year, much of the world celebrates the birth of Christ. The focus is on the baby Jesus and the joy of the announcement at His birth. We sing “Joy to the World” commemorating His birth and the joy of the Savior. But how many truly seek out the “good news” of Jesus Christ and the true joy He brings to our lives through His death, burial, resurrection, and promise to return one day to take us to be with Him in heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 3:13-17)?

Perhaps that should be of no surprise because even today there seems to be a lack of concern for searching out the “good news” of Christ. Have we grown tired of the story of Christ? Not just His birth, but the climax of His death, burial, and resurrection? Let us be like the shepherds and magi, earnestly seeking to know Christ—the way, the truth, and the life!

*Article adapted from author Paul Mowrer, Monticello Church of Christ, Monticello, AR. Bulletin Digest, December 2021, Vol. 40, No. 12.*

### **‘You shall call His name...’**

One of the earliest predictions about the birth of Christ came from the prophet Isaiah. Seven centuries before our Lord was born, this Old Testament preacher wrote: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). This passage would be repeated later to remind us that Jesus is our Immanuel (Matthew 1:23).



In the Bible, names mean something. “Immanuel” comes from two Hebrew words. When they are combined, they mean “God with us.” Unlike any other person in history, Immanuel would be conceived by a true miracle. By the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, he would be conceived in the womb of a virgin.



Unlike any other person, Immanuel would never commit any sin (Hebrews 4:15).

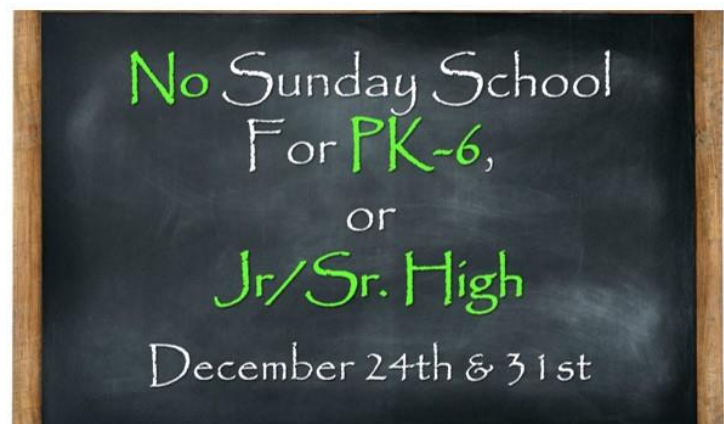
Unlike any other person, Immanuel would “be with us” and never, ever leave us (Hebrews 13:5).

I once watched an artist paint a picture. As she started painting, the picture was dark and even foreboding. She drew in trees without leaves – looking dead. The sky was filled with dark clouds – which made everything dark. Snow wasn’t falling. It was coming in among sheets of sleet. In the distance, she painted a small, dark house. It looked like something from a nightmare. But then, with a simple stroke of bright yellow, she showed a warm, bright light coming out of the only window. The light was inviting, and it represented warmth and light and friendship. It was a “welcome home” type of light. The artist finished her work by giving it the title – “HOPE!”

Article adapted from author Lary Fitzgerald, Woodlawn Church of Christ, Abilene, T. Bulletin Digest, December 2021, Vol. 40, No. 12.



The Upper Room for January and February is now available. There are both large and small print books available. You will find them located inside the front glass doors and in the elevator.





During Advent on Sunday mornings, we have talked about hope, peace, and joy and this Sunday we'll wrap up Advent with love. While not always explicitly stated, all of this is caught up under a theme of grace. On a doctrinal level, grace is the unmerited favor of a loving God. If you've listened to enough of my sermons, you know I like to look deeply at words and the many different meanings that are contained within them. So let's do the same with grace and reflect on how this Advent and Christmas season brings grace into our lives.

In English we use grace in a couple of different ways: one, we use it as a title for a prayer such as saying "grace" before a meal, and we also might use it to describe the beautiful movements of a dancer or an athlete. So in this way, grace is not only something we receive from God, but grace is also our response of gratitude and grace is the recognition of beauty.

In our English translations of the New Testament, grace is used to translate the Greek word, "charis." This is the word from which we get, in English, charisma, and Eucharist (the fancy churchy word for Communion). Grace, then, is an energy that can fill us and enliven us, and it is also that which binds us together in community.

This Christmas may you receive and be filled with grace. May your eyes be opened to see the beauty around you and for gratitude to overflow in all your interactions. May you be filled with the energy of grace so that when others look upon you, they see the grace of God embodied. May grace draw you close to not only friends and family, but draw you close into the beloved community that is the kingdom of God which includes the hurting, the lonely, the marginalized, and even your enemies.

Grace, peace, and Merry Christmas,  
Pastor David B. Clark