



HILLTOP HERALD-DECEMBER 2023

MONONA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECEMBER ADVENT STUDY

On **Sundays, December 3 and 17** at 11:30am Pastor Paul will be leading discussions on top news stories of the week and how they tie in with our scripture readings from Advent.

ADULT GAME DAY

Our next Game Day will be on **Friday, December 1**. Come as you are to rebuild connections and have some fun together playing some games.

The fun starts on at 10 AM in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your favorite games to share. Kay Cowing

MULTI-GENERATIONAL MUSIC

Shirley Robinson will direct a multi-generational choir who will provide special music on **Sunday, December 10**. Practice will be held at 9:15am that Sunday. Children and adults, as well as members and non-members, are welcome to join the group.

2023 CHURCH CONFERENCE

Our yearly Church Conference meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 10** right after worship. Each year, every United Methodist Church holds a meeting to review their ministries (past and future), endorse ministry candidates, and set budgets. This is our annual meeting & all are invited to attend.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL WINTER BREAK

There will be no Children's Sunday School on **December 24 and 31**. Our regular class schedule will resume on **Sunday, January 7 at 9:00am**.

CONFIRMATION CLASS

There will be no class during the month of December. We start back up on **Sunday January 7** at 9:00am.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

The Holiday Bazaar was a huge success! Thanks to so many of you who helped organize, advertise, make crafts, set-up, bake stuff, make chili, wrangle children, sell things, clean up, and tear down. We all made it happen! We earned over \$2,300 to split between our Solar Panels and our Community Meals. THANK YOU!

PASTOR'S COLUMN

"A Short Advent"

Most years, we have four Sundays of Advent followed by Christmas Eve and Christmas during the week. This December is different. Our "Fourth Sunday of Advent" will also be "Christmas Eve." We will light our fourth candle on the Advent wreath in the morning and the Christ Candle in the evening.

We have adjusted our worship plans to accommodate for this unusual occurrence.

On the morning of December 24, we will offer an informal worship service in our Fellowship Hall. We will sing Christmas carols, share a Christmas story and feast on cinnamon rolls, juice and coffee. The smell of a Christmas bakery will be in the air. Guaranteed!

Then in the evening at 7:00 PM we will celebrate our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. We will hear the Christmas story and, with our candles lit, we will sing, "Silent Night, Holy Night."

If you are interested in participating in lighting our Advent Wreath on one of the four Sundays of Advent or Christmas Eve, please let me know.

Advent is derived from the Latin "adventus," which means "coming." This season proclaims the coming of Christ—whose birth we prepare to celebrate once again.

We wait patiently and prepare ourselves for the gift of the Christ child.

Pastor Paul

BIBLE PASSAGES & THEMES 10:00AM SERVICE

December 3 – 1st Sunday of Advent

"Come and Save Us" Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

December 10 – 2nd Sunday of Advent

"Comfort, O Comfort My People" Isaiah 40:1-11

December 17 – 3rd Sunday of Advent

"Our Final Christmas Preparations" Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

December 24 – 4th Sunday of Advent 10:00am

We will celebrate with Christmas Carols in the Fellowship Hall, with Cinnamon Rolls, Juice and Coffee.

December 24 – Christmas Eve 7:00pm

"What Has Happened?" Luke 2: 1-21

December 31 – The First Sunday After Christmas

"Rejoicing with God" Isaiah 61:10-62:3

MISSION OF THE MONTH

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Our December Mission of the Month is the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). It is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all Americans affected by mental illness. A senior leadership team sets the strategic direction of the organization and the young adult advisory group represents the voices of youth.

NAMI works to educate, support, advocate, and listen to improve the lives of people with mental illness and their loved ones.

Thank you for your generous support of this very important mission. Please mark your check or offering envelope with "NAMI."

The Mission Team

ADVENT WREATH

We would like to invite your family to help our congregation prepare for Advent by lighting the **Advent wreath** during of the Sunday services. We will provide you the reading and instructions. Please email the church at secretarymumc@sbcglobal.net and let Kay know which date you are available or signup on the sheet in front of the office.

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING

"Love Beyond Christmas"

Ring bells this year to raise money for the critical services of The Salvation Army. With many locations throughout Dane County, there is a location convenient to you.

Register for a shift (or many!) with your family, coworkers, friends, or by yourself. Donations go toward critical programs in Dane County, including emergency women and family shelter, housing programs, community meals, after school programming, and more. Sign up to ring at www.RegisterToRing.com.

MUMC MEN'S GROUP

All men of the church are invited to the Men's Club breakfast that will take place on **Saturday, December 9** at 9:00 am at Denny's on Broadway in Monona. Come and enjoy great food and fellowship.

ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP BOARD REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

The Accountable Leadership Board (ALB) has been meeting monthly at the church to discuss the needs of the church and congregation and to plan ways to carry out solutions to those needs. In order to keep the church members apprised of what the board deals with, these are some of the items discussed over the past few months:

- We have been reading “Being the Church in a Post-Pandemic World” and getting ideas about how we can best move the church forward since the pandemic. Topics discussed as they relate to our church and its leadership included being spiritually grounded, committed, innovative, resilient, and courageous.
- The free Community Meals have been a success and more dates are being planned for the future. We hope that many from our congregation will attend and be welcoming to new people from the neighborhood who might be interested in our church.
- Every month, we review the previous month’s budget report and discuss any issues involving church funds.
- We voted to approve the installation of solar panels on the south side of the church roof. This installation was made possible with the help of several grants. A tree was removed in order to make this installation possible and the installation may begin as soon as February 2024.

The next meeting of the ALB will be the Church Conference on Sunday, December 10th after church. All are encouraged to attend this short meeting to better understand the workings of the church.

Louise Belk, ALB chair

HILLTOPPERS

The Hilltoppers group will be meeting on **Monday, December 11** at 11 AM in Fellowship Hall.

This will be our last meeting until next April as we do not meet in the months of January, February, and March. I am tentatively planning on stepping down as leader due to age and some other ailments so volunteers are needed to carry on this group. I am also treasurer so will be looking for someone to do that job also.

The December meeting will find us addressing envelopes to shut-ins and others who need a nice Christmas card for Christmas. Each person will put address labels on the envelopes and then take the card home with them, put a stamp on the envelope and drop in the mailbox. We will also sing some Christmas carols to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Then will finish up with a potluck lunch. We will use church plates, silver, etc. so is only necessary to bring some food to share.



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN INFORMATION

ADVENT POTLUCK BRUNCH

On **Saturday December 2**, the United Methodist Women will host an Advent Potluck Brunch starting at 10am. All are welcome. Bring a brunch item (egg or potato casserole, fruit, bread/muffins) for all to share.

Entertainment will be provided by the Wisconsin Dickens Carolers. Our Social Media Manager, Kirstin Roble, is a part of this organization.

CIRCLE INFORMATION

Friendship Circle - Wednesday, December 13 at 11am at the church Fellowship Hall. Jackie Hull and Kay Cowing will be hosts.

Faith Circle- Thursday, December 14 at 11:30am at Olive Garden-East for a Christmas lunch. Call Jan Wanek at 395-2433 with any questions.

HELPING OUR COMMUNITY IN NEED

On November 8th, Jackie Hull led a group of church members to Second Harvest on Madison's east side. They spent the afternoon putting labels on cups of peas, a pallet amounting to 2184 cups of peas! Thank you Jackie Hull, Dianne Totten, Kay DeBraul, Dorilee Miller, Jeanette Williams, Julie Whitehorse, and Marilyn Hearden.

JAVA JIVE

Monarchs and Avocado Lands

EQUAL EXCHANGE'S ORGANIC avocados come from two small farmer organizations in Michoacán, Mexico. PRAGOR and Grupo Integradora Vics lie roughly 150 miles west of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Farmland can be conservation land—when managed with that goal in mind. Monarch butterflies could soon be listed as endangered because of their drastic population decline—more than 90% since the 1990s. Several factors are at play, including severe weather and pesticides, but the major threat is loss of habitat along their migration paths. While you could plant native milkweed or nectar plants as waystations, the avocado farmers in central Mexico who supply EQUAL EXCHANGE are also protecting and restoring the forests where these amazing butterflies spend the winter.

Facilitated by PRAGOR and Vics, the farmer members plant pine trees as part of reforestation projects in the region where monarchs overwinter. Government policies encourage these activities in an effort to counteract illegal and legal logging. The groves of organic avocados provide sanctuary along the monarchs' migration corridor. Why plant pines? Pines grow almost twice as fast, and they have better survival rates than firs, establishing the shade and understory growth conditions under which oyamel fir seedlings can thrive.”

PRAGOR is comprised of farms that have been growing avocados for multiple generations. The cooperative intentionally chooses not to incorporate newer large farms or plantations even though that might increase volume and their market options. Furthermore, along with other community groups, PRAGOR committed last summer to planting 50,000 pine trees resistant to a barkworm jeopardizing local forests. To that end, PRAGOR USES PART OF ITS FAIR TRADE/EQUAL EXCHANGE PREMIUMS to purchase tools to remove infected trees and buy seedlings for the nursery.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Grow milkweed (if native in your region) and ask for EQUAL EXCHANGE avocados by name. Thank stores who already offer them. In either case, tell the store staff the motivation behind your comments. Who knows what will sprout if you plant the seed?

Adapted from the Equal Exchange Website

**This is just another different and unique way, that our Fair Trade purchases, are not only supporting the Avocado Farmers but, also helping to save the butterflies!

Thank You ALL for your continuing support of Equal Exchange!
We couldn't do it without you!

Jackie Hull. c-608-576-7837
Karelyn Hopkins c 608-577-3185

READ 'EM & MEET



The book club will meet on **Sunday, December 10 @ 1pm** at the home of Jeanette Williams. There will be no book but you will read a play together. Please bring a small dessert item or tea sandwiches to share. **Visitors and new members are always welcome to attend.** Join this fun and lively group!

ST STEPHEN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH LONGEST NIGHT WORSHIP

Thursday December 21 at 6:30pm

This service is offered on December 21st, the Winter Solstice, which is the longest night of the year. For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. This service is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle. In this pandemic season of life, grief and loss are magnified and nearly universal. Therefore, we hope this worship can provide a space of calm, quiet, and healing. Pastor Paul will be participating in this service.

WORSHIP VOLUNTEER SIGNUP

We have an online Volunteer Sign Up Genius listing with the volunteer jobs needed for worship each week. We would especially like to fill the **Ushers** position. Please check your schedules and sign on using the link below. You can also send an email to the church office with your requested dates.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904094DA8AE22AB9-volunteer>

COMMUNITY - WIDE MEAL

Our next Community Meal is on **Thursday, December 28 at 5:30 p.m.** in Fellowship Hall

The menu will feature smoked ham and cheesy potatoes and a veggie. We want to give our neighbors an opportunity to spend time together and get to know each other. We encourage our regular participants to attend. All are welcome.

OUR SYMPATHY GOES TO

Terry Peterson and his family, upon the death of his wife, Helen on October 23.

END OF YEAR CONTRIBUTIONS

We will try to do our best to find any donations that have been postmarked by December 31, 2023 and to credit them to 2023. If you receive your end of the year statement from the church, and believe a particular donation should be for 2023, which wasn't included in that statement, we will be happy to give you an amended statement. Please call the church office if you have any questions.

EASY AUTOMATIC GIVING

Make giving to the church very easy and save the church some time. The automatic transfers are completely safe and secure, and cost you nothing. You control the amount and frequency of the withdrawals, and can cancel any time you like. Transfers done electronically, along with any additional donations you make, will be listed on your normal periodic statement from the church. Just fill out the form that is in the church office.

For those who already have automatic giving and want to change for the new 2024 pledge amount, just fill out a new form. On the form, check the box "Change Donation Amount", put your name, the new amount, the date of the first donation, and finally sign and date the form. For questions or other information, please call the church office at 608-222-1633.



STEPHEN MINISTRY

Life, at times, can be filled with disappointments or difficult decisions, or challenging situations that leave us feeling overwhelmed. We need not face these tough times alone. A Stephen Minister is ready to walk along with you. To find out more, speak with Pastor Paul or Mark Buffat (608) 335-5063.

OUR WEBSITE

Check out our website: www.mononaunitedmethodistchurch.org

- We have the recorded mini-service available for an online Worship experience as well as our in-person worship. Check our website for more information.
- We have a **Giving** tab on our website to make a donation with your credit card or checking account. To make donating easier, use our QR Code.



RIVER FOOD PANTRY

The River is currently getting most of the eggs already in cartons and only need egg cartons on a limited basis. Monona UMC is still collecting all sizes, as we still have a few alternatives to take them.

Paper grocery bags are always in high demand for The River. They also will take any non-perishable and shelf stable goods. Some other highly requested items for The River include:

- 100% juice products
- low sugar cereals
- Tuna Helper and tuna
- disposable diapers all sizes, (including adult sizes)

PLEASE GIVE BLOOD

The American Red Cross has its Annual Holiday Blood Drive on **Friday, December 22** from 7:00 am until 1:00 pm. It will be held in the Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center. Call for an appointment @ 1-800-RED-CROSS or signup online www.redcrossblood.org.



**American
Red Cross**



**AT THIS BUSY TIME OF YEAR,
TAKE A BREAK WITH A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH**

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense
of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

AMEN

By Pope Francis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJz0ZuxxMI0&ab_channel=SteveKlaperSongandSpirit

\$ Financial Report \$

Cash Flow October 31, 2023

<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Income	\$ 24,674	\$ 230,133
General Operating Expenses	22,422	226,084
Net Surplus (Shortfall)	\$ 2,252	\$ 4,049

STEWARDSHIP - WHY DECEMBER 25?

Did you ever wonder why we celebrate Christmas on December 25th? Jesus didn't have a birth certificate, so how do we know when Jesus was really born? Because the Bible offers no date for Jesus' birth, the placement of the nativity is up for debate. But there are three explanations that land us on December 25th.

First, the Christian historian Sextus Julius Africanus had identified the 25th as Christ's nativity in the 3rd century. Chronographers reckoned that the world was created on the spring equinox and four days later, on March 25th, light was created. Since the existence of Jesus signaled a beginning of a new era, or new creation, the Biblical chronographers assumed Jesus' conception would have also fallen on March 25th, placing his birth in December, nine months later.

The second theory proposes that early Christians were convinced that Jesus must have lived upon earth for an exact number of years. Therefore, the date on which he died would also have been the same as the date of his conception. Because they believed that he was crucified on March 25 (and therefore conceived on March 25), his birth would have been placed nine months later, on December 25th.

The final theory concludes that December 25th was chosen at Rome because it was also the date of the winter solstice in the Julian calendar and a popular pagan feast celebrating the birthday of the invincible Sun. The pagan feast was established by Emperor Aurelian in 274 A.D. After Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he wanted to draw people away from these pagan festivities and point to Christ as the true Sun of Righteousness, and so instituted at Rome the feast of the Nativity on the same date.

So, you can take your pick as to which theory you believe has us celebrating Christmas on December 25th. No matter what option you choose—or even if you believe we have the date all wrong — Christmas is a reminder that God has come near and that the world and our lives will never be the same.

Rev. Jason Mahnke

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, 888-903-9863 or wumf@wumf.org

The Life and Ministry of God's People In Monona United Methodist Church

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Pastor's Day Off Kay Vacation 10:00am Game Day- Hall 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 12pm sanctuary in use 3-5:30 Paper Mn	2 UMW Advent Brunch 8am setup 10am brunch 8:30am-3pm Revive CPR class- upstairs 12pm sanctuary in use
3 <u>See schedule below</u> 1st Sunday of Advent 8:45 Adult Choir Rehearsal 11:30 Advent St	4 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 3-9pm Paper Moon Drama + set prep	5 11:00 Staff Meeting	6 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 2-4pm Caregvr support group 3-5:30 Paper Mn 5:30 Girl Scouts	7	8 Pastor's Day Off 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 1-3pm Mah Jongg-Cry Room	9 8:30am-3pm Revive CPR class- hall 9am Men's Breakfast-Denny's
10 <u>See schedule below</u> 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:15 Multi-Generational Choir Rehearsal 11am Church Conference 1 Read / Meet	11 Kay Vacation 11 Hilltoppers Fellowship hall 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 3-6:30pm Paper Moon Drama 5:30-7 pm Girl Scouts	12 9:30-12:15 NewBridge Foot ClinicF.H. 11:00 Staff Mtg	13 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 1:30 Friendship Circle-hall 3-6:30 Paper Moon	14 11:30am Faith Circle at Olive Garden East	15 Pastor's Day Off 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 3-4:30 Girl Scout Troop	16 8:30am-3pm Revive CPR class- hall 10am-12pm Girl Scout Troop-upstairs 3-7pm Hall in use
17 <u>See schedule below</u> 3rd Sunday of Advent Newsletter Deadline 8:45 Adult Choir Rehearsal 11:30 Advent Study	18 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use	19 9:30-12:15 NewBridge Foot ClinicF.H. 11:00 Staff Mtg 12:15 Staff Lunch Out	20 Kay Vacation 10-11 RSVP Knit/Stitch-hall 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use	21 6:30 St Stephen's Lutheran Longest Night Worship	22 Pastor's Day Off 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use 1-3pm Mah Jongg-Cry Rm	23
24 <u>See schedule below</u> 4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve No Sunday Sch 10am Casual Worship 7pm Worship	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26 9:30-12:15 NewBridge Foot ClinicF.H. 11:00 Staff Meeting	27 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use	28 5:30pm Community Meal- fellowship hall	29 Pastor's Day Off Kay Vacation 11am Upstairs Narthex in Use	30
31 <u>See schedule below</u> No Sunday Sch						

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

9:00 Sunday School for children
 10:00 Worship 11:00 Fellowship
 1:00 El Libertador Worship in Spanish



MONONA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

606 NICHOLS ROAD
MONONA, WI 53716

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The HILLTOP HERALD is produced monthly for distribution to the members and friends of Monona United Methodist Church.

Monona UMC Church office 608-222-1633

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Homepage www.mononaunitedmethodistchurch.org

Pastor Paul Johnsen 920-246-2855 pjohnsen58@gmail.com

Kay – secretarymumc@sbcglobal.net

Mark – markbmumc@gmail.com

Kirstin - kirstinroblemezzo@gmail.com

Worship 10:00am

DECEMBER 2023



CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 24, 10:00am Christmas Eve Morning, Christmas Carols with cinnamon rolls in our Fellowship Hall.

December 24, 7:00pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service with the Adult Choir