

# THE PARISH CONNECTION

December 2020/ January 2021

A Community of Faith, Inspired by Christ, Gathered to Grow, Empowered to Serve.

## Lectionary Readings for December

**December 6, 2020 [Purple]**

**2nd Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (UMH 806)

2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

**December 13, 2020 [Purple]**

**3rd Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126 (UMH 847)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28

**December 20, 2020 [Purple]**

**4th Sunday of Advent**

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:47-55 (UMH 199)

Romans 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38

**December 24, 2020 [White]**

**Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96 (UMH 815)

Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

**December 27, 2020 [White]**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas**

Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148 (UMH 861)

Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

## Schedule of Christmas Activities

- Dec 11 Cookie Sale & Baked Potato meal, 3:30 - 7 p.m.
- Dec. 20 Willow River Parish Virtual Sunday school program
- Dec 24 Christmas Eve Worship 7 pm zoom

## New Christmas Tradition

Beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>, read one chapter of the book of Luke in the Bible each evening. There are 24 chapters. On Christmas Eve you will have read an entire account of Jesus's life and wake up Christmas morning knowing WHO and WHY we celebrate.



## BIG THANK YOU TO ALL!!

Thank you to all who donated for college boxes, Grace Place bags, and Christmas for Children. Also, for packing and hauling 120 boxes for the food shelf.



## **Prayer Concerns**

*Joys*—The Christmas Season, family, visits with friends, bell ringers, volunteers, our youth, Christmas for Children, weather, good health, the holidays, our time during bible study

*Concerns*—Holiday travel mercies, the New Year, those alone during the holidays, COVID-19, Charge Conference

*Remembering*—Family and friends of Merkle Greene Sr. and Randy Koenig

## From Bishop Jung

### Giving Thanks When It Is Hard

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his  
pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations.

(Psalm 100)

Many may find thanks-giving to be a real challenge in this pandemic year. Virtually no one has come through this year untouched by grief, loss, anxiety, illness, or financial challenge. We have been separated physically, and this has had significant emotional and spiritual implications for people around the globe. In many ways, this is a brand new experience for the majority of us, but it is helpful to remind us of what God's people have faced century after century throughout time.

The large majority of United States citizens have never been an oppressed people, though in this past year, we have seen the fruit of racial oppression in shocking ways. Planet-wide and historically, cultural oppression has been the norm rather than the exception. Even today, many people live hand to mouth, never sure where the next meal may come from, never have access to basic shelter, clothing, or healthcare. The shadows of fear, threat of violence, infant and childhood mortality, famine and disease, cover a significant population in our world.

This was normal for primitive, pre-modern people from the Hebrew culture. Imagine no clean water, no sanitation, no electricity, no technology, no travel, no entertainment that we all take for granted each and every day. A virus like the one we are dealing with today could easily wipe out a village, a tribe, a community,

a culture, a society. Food was scarce most of the time – the practical reason (in addition to the spiritual) for fasting twice a week was to make sure food would stretch throughout the full year. No dentistry, no eye care, no antibiotics, no complex surgeries, no vitamins. People were considered old at 40, if they lived that long. Infant mortality was in excess of 70% in many regions. No air conditioning, refrigeration, no books, no movies, not TV, no computers – so many things we use to make our life easier.

Truly, my siblings in Christ, this is a time for us to rise above our losses, to heal from our grief, to move beyond our grievances and frustrations so that can focus on all that we have to be thankful for. We have many things that help us enjoy a quality of life, even in the midst of the pandemic.

One thing we share with our pre-modern Hebrew ancestors though is that we have been gifted with loving relationships and community. People are the greatest gift God gives us, second only to the gift of God's Son, Jesus the Christ. We have grown even more grateful for our relationships as we have been denied close contact. Let us rejoice in the gift of partners and children, grandchildren and siblings, friends and neighbors, community and culture. We may not be able to gather with loved ones for traditional Thanksgiving gatherings and meals, but we still have loved ones. Hold in prayer all those who have lost family and friends through this COVID-19 pandemic and celebrate with joy those whom you cannot see in person this year.

Imagine what it will be like when we can reunite safely and comfortably, engaging in hugs and kisses and table fellowship and enjoyment of one another's company! We will offer a different kind of Thanksgiving then, but this year, let us rejoice, let us give thanks to God, and let us reach out in whatever way we can to tell people what gifts they are to us in this challenging year. Make a joyful noise, give thanks and praise. Have a blessed Thanksgiving. Bless you all.

## December Birthdays

Benjamin Pietz	12/2
Carole Olson	12/4
Julie Longfellow	12/5
Randy Olson	12/5
Todd Petersen, Jr.	12/5
Andrea Jilek	12/14
Joe Warner	12/16
Michael Stark	12/18
Christina Beebe	12/19
Patty Warner	12/21
Doug Kruger	12/22
Gail Kuhl	12/23
Morgan Olson	12/30
Cindy Warner	12/30

## December Anniversaries

Neil & Joan Lillie 12/30

## Faith Family Church Corner

We are working with the district strategy team at the Wisconsin United Methodist Church to find someone to run the Recovery Ministry. If you know someone that is interested in part-time employment contact Rev. Barb. The person must be a Christian and it would help if they are familiar with recovery; they do not need to be clergy.

We are continuing with our construction and have our new door in the front of the church with our stained glass in the front of the church. We have installed our sound system. We are also working on remodeling the kitchen. If you are in need of an internet connection, you can connect to WiFi in the parking lot.

Thank you to all that have put in their time on these projects.

## SPRC Corner

We have been working with Pastor Hakki on church forms and getting ready for Charge Conference.

## CL Methodist Church Christmas Cookie and Baked Potato Sale

The CL UMC annual cookie and baked potato sale will be held on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 3:30-7 pm in the church basement. A mask is required. **TAKE OUT ONLY!** Cookies will be boxed prior to the sale--there will be an assortment in each box. Curbside pickup is available.

***Each family should provide 6 dozen cookies the night before 4-8pm or the morning of between 8-10am so they can be sorted and boxed.***

**Watch for a Google doc to sign-up to work or provide items for the sale.**

## Sunday School Program Sunday, Dec. 20th



The kids have been working hard on the Christmas program. It will look a bit different this year since we are virtual. If you have not been contacted, but would like to participate in the program, please contact Diane or Heather. We plan to have everything recorded beforehand and put together as a video for all to enjoy.

## New Church Directory

As of November 23<sup>rd</sup>, this is the latest communication from Lifetouch: "I do apologize, but due to the amount of accounts our print shop had, they did not get yours finalized before they went on shut down. I am requesting your account to be one of the first ones printed upon their return and you should be receiving it by the end of December."

## Coffee/Greeter & Counters

No assignments will be made for coffee/greeter and counter 2021 until church resumes in-person worship.



A season of fine crisp December weather has arrived! December is a month of excitement for many people. Some think of the birth of Jesus when they think of Christmas, while others think of Santa Claus and gifts. Most of the children wait for Christmas with excitement. I can't forget the gift my father, disguised as Santa Claus, gave me when I was a child; it was roller skates. At that time, I wondered how Santa Claus came to my home because it didn't have a fireplace. I have a memory of being happy for quite a while because of the roller skates I received from him. In that sense, the Christmas for Children event is special to me because it is an opportunity to give happy memories to children. I hope they will be happy through gifts prepared by adults.

I'm thinking about how I'm going to spend the season of Advent these days. As with other seasons, the season of Advent is special. The calendar of the world begins in January. However, we, Christians, wait for the beginning of the year from December, remembering and preparing for the birth of Jesus Christ. Although there are regional differences, December and January are the darkest and coldest periods in Korea. When I think of December and January, I recall the words of Genesis 1:5 (NRSV): "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." Jesus Christ came to the earth at the coldest time of the year to save us. Then, he chose the lowest place, not the highest. Christmas shows the essence of the Gospel we believe in.

We light candles during this season waiting for the day. As it gets dark and cold, our psychological state will be affected by it. Nevertheless, when darkness comes to our hearts and minds, I hope we leave worries, concerns, anxieties, darkness, and sadness that give you a hard time in God's hand. In general, the end of Advent is Christmas Eve, which means Christmas evening. Darkness and night were signs of the beginning of a new history. The darkness was the starting point of God's work.



Advent is the season of waiting. How good is waiting? I hope you will wrap up this year well for this month and welcome the New Year with hope. To have hope for the future is to light the lamp in my heart. There is a big difference in the quality of life between those who dream and those who do not, those who plan and those who do not. I hope you have a season of waiting in hope. May God's grace be with you, so that you may turn on the lamp in your minds and stay in it.

Your brother in Christ,  
Hakki



## Lectionary Readings for January

### January 3, 2021 [White]

#### Epiphany of the Lord

Isa 60:1-6, Ps 72:1-7, 10-14 (UMH 795),  
Eph 3:1-12, Mt 2:1-12

### January 10, 2021 [White]

#### Baptism of the Lord

#### Korean American Awareness Day

Gen 1:1-5, Ps 29 (UMH 761),  
Acts 19:1-7, Mk 1:4-11

### January 17, 2021 [Green]

#### Human Relations Day

1 Sam 3:1-10, Ps 139:1-6, 13-18 (UMH 854),  
1 Cor 6:12-20, Jn 1:43-51

### January 24, 2021 [Green]

#### Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Ps 62:5-12 (UMH 787),  
1 Cor 7:29-31, Mk 1:14-

### January 31, 2021 (Green)

#### 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Deut 18:15-20, Ps 111 (UMH 832),  
1 Cor 8:1-13, Mk 1:21-28

## UMW Minutes

Five members met on Wed. Nov. 11 at the church. Masks and social distancing was followed.

- We voted to change our checking account to Westconsin Credit Union in Amery.
- Plans for the Cookie Sale and Potato Meal were discussed.
- The kitchen will be cleaned on Nov.17 so anyone who would like to bake their cookies there can do so after that day.
- We will not have a Christmas luncheon in Dec. Hopefully we can celebrate Christmas in July at the Clear Lake Park in 2021!
- November is World Thank Offering month, an opportunity to respond to God's abundant grace. Treasurer Ruth will see that our offering is sent to the Northwest District.
- Our lesson this month was on "The Give and Take of Gratitude"

*Submitted by Joan Lillie*

## Virtual Red Kettle Campaign



COVID-19 has impacted so many things including how many times we leave our house.

Right now you can help our most important fundraiser of the year from the comfort of your own home.

Funds raised at this link: <http://bit.ly/SerenityHouseRedKettle> will stay in Polk County to help Polk County residents who are struggling to make ends meet.

As you know, we help in lots of ways!

### Ways we help in Polk County

- Rent and utility assistance
- Homeless shelter assistance
- Backpack Program for Hungry Kids
- Help with COVID relief
- Disaster Services

Donate to our virtual kettle today to help! ALSO, you can become a "Virtual Bell Ringer".

Simply copy and paste the link: <http://bit.ly/SerenityHouseRedKettle> and ask people to donate to the "Virtual Red Kettle" for Polk County.

### This is a great way to help without leaving your home!

Thank you in advance for helping to support The Salvation Army and the people we serve every day.

### To view our latest newsletter, [CLICK HERE](#)

Visit us on the web at: [www.saserenityhome.org](http://www.saserenityhome.org)

Or find us on Facebook at: [Polk County Salvation Army](#)

## Offering

Please consider continuing your giving; offerings can be sent to: Arlene Althoff (CL); Terri Wilson (FF), and Janice Thompson (DP). Thank you!



**...Because you eat**

Ruby's Pantry food distribution will take

place December 12<sup>th</sup> and January 9<sup>th</sup> in the AmTec parking lot at 241 Venture Drive Amery. There is a \$20 cash donation per share. You will receive an abundance of grocery items. There is no income or residency requirements – everyone that eats is welcome! This is a drive-thru distribution. We have set our hours from 8am to 10am. We will start sending cars through as soon as we are set up which is much quicker with our drive through set up. Please do not be late because it goes fast. Also we will load your vehicle from the passenger side and prefer to just put the items into the back of your vehicle. For everyone's safety, please have your vehicle empty to receive food in the back so volunteers do not need to walk around to the other side of the vehicle. We look forward to seeing you. Volunteers are greatly appreciated and should arrive at 7:15am. If you would like to volunteer or if you would like more information, please contact 715-268-7390 or email office.ameryucc@gmail.com.

*January Birthdays*

Barb Martin	1/5
Denise Severson	1/8
Dan Jilek	1/10
Julie Warner	1/10
Connor Fouks	1/11
Katie Fouks	1/11
Penny Warner	1/12
Paul Webster	1/12
Zach Elmer	1/15
Steve Warner	1/17
David Goodrich	1/18
Amanda Millermon	1/18
John Webster	1/20
Brittany Avery	1/24
Bailey Blanchard	1/28
Diane Paulson	1/28
Dylan Leslie	1/29
Pat Lillie	1/30
Meaghan Pietz	1/31

*January Anniversaries*

Dan & Missy Severson	1/23
Jeff & Terri Wilson	1/24

**RESPECT**

Rarely do you see this for a stranger.

Especially if they are DIFFERENT.

So let's make a change to share LOVE!

People are people; take the time to be understanding while listening and giving eye contact!

Everyone deserves to be accepted and comforted.

Care for each other and take time to BE KIND!

*By Heather Greene*

**Christmas Angels**

Christmas Angels are still available, please check your email or call Debi at 715-441-5477.

**Salvation Army Bell Ringing**

Thank you to all who rang bells at Nilssen's Market on Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>!

**Get the Word Out!**

Please spread the word regarding our take out cookie sale and baked potato meal. Thank you.

**Deadline for the Feb. Newsletter is Jan. 22nd**



THE WILLOW RIVER PARISH  
CLEAR LAKE, DEER PARK, FAITH FAMILY  
PO BOX 269 – 420 FOURTH STREET  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**The Willow River Parish United Methodist Churches**  
Hakki Min, Pastor

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**Sunday Worship**  
10:00 a.m. virtual service via Zoom

**Office Hours**  
10 am – 12 pm Tuesday-Friday