

THE PARISH CONNECTION

January 2025

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

Lectionary Readings

JAN 05 | Epiphany Sunday (White or Gold)

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

JAN 12 | Baptism of the Lord (White or Gold)

Isa 43:1-7; Ps 29 (UMH 761);
Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

JAN 19 | 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany; Human Relations Day (Green)

Isa 62:1-5; Ps 36:5-10 (UMH 771);
1 Cor 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

JAN 26 | 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany; Ecumenical Sunday (Green)

Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Ps 19 (UMH 750);
1 Cor 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

IN OUR PRAYERS:

Joys—Season of Advent, Christmas programs, Beautiful Winter of Wisconsin, Snow, Methodist Bell Choir, Emerald Holiday, Christmas Cookie & Stuffed Baked Potato Sale, our kids, family time during the Holidays

Concerns—Stryder, Pat Lillie, Lon, Meghan, all countries with wars, Gaza—especially the children, Jamie, Todd, Ardys, Edison, Betty, Mary, Libby, Ruth, Julie, Gloria, Roger L, Holly, Alison's friend, Barb's family, Lori, Harry, Elaine Bannink, Terry, LeRoy & Barb, Debbie Stevens, Penny Warner, Bev's boys, Larry, Vicki, Mary K, Gary, Bourne, Paula, Carol, Deb, Adam, Sheldon, Steve

Remembering—Family and friends of Mark Tellijohn, Ann Stuntz, Daniel Petersen, Mike Kirk, and Steve Keller

During winter, when harsh weather comes due to too low temperatures or heavy snow and each church decides to close, we will have a Zoom worship at 10 a.m.

Zoom: Please use the following information to join us on Sundays for worship at 8:30 a.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88613652777?pwd=UipaSVhGN0g1Qnc3VDV5T0Jhci83UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 1365 2777 Passcode: 421072

Willow River Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/Willow-River-Parish-103076225619623/>. Please send any information you would like posted to Heather Greene mr.mrs.greene5@gmail.com or Gail Kuhl kuhlg@cltcomm.net

Love for our Troops: This year we are sending gift cards, which will be included in a thank-you card. Monetary donations would be appreciated to cover the cost of the items and postage. If you know someone who is in the service call Linda Jurisch, 715-263-2288. These personnel should be from the Clear Lake, Clayton, Reeve, Forest and Deer Park areas. Please send donations during Jan & Feb to: LouAnn Hansen, 471 7th Avenue, Clear Lake, WI 54005. Checks can be made out to VFW Auxiliary.

Big thank you to Faith Family for Hosting the 2024 Charge Conference!

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Denise Severson	1/08
Dan Jilek	1/10
Penny Warner	1/12
Paul Webster	1/12
Harlan Coyer	1/13
Steve Warner	1/17
David Goodrich	1/18
Amanda Millermon	1/18
Kayla Thompson	1/18
Brittany Anderson	1/24
Bailey Blanchard	1/28
Diane Paulson	1/28
Pat Lillie	1/30

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Hakki Min & Esther Kim	1/06
Dan & Missy Severson	1/23
Jeff & Terri Wilson	1/24

Ruby's Pantry distributes food at Pop-Up Pantry locations across MN & WI. There is no income or residency requirement and for a \$25 bundle donation you will receive an abundance of groceries. One food distribution will take place **January 11th** in the **SMC LTD** parking lot at 9000 Griffin Street E in Amery. This is a drive-thru distribution from **7:30 am to 9:00 am**. Volunteers are greatly appreciated and should arrive at **6:45 am**. If you would like to volunteer or if you would like more information, please contact 715-268-7390 or email office.ameryucc@gmail.com.

Another Ruby's Pantry location is: 1245 County Highway CC, New Richmond, Wisconsin 54017, which distributes on the **3rd Thursday** of the Month. Registration begins at 5:00 PM. Food bundles available **5:00-7:00 PM**. Hosted by: Faith Community Church. Check out their website www.rubyspantry.org to find a location and time that works for you.

UMC Special Sundays: Listed below are the special Sundays for 2025. Donation envelopes will be at the back of the churches.

- Human Relations Day ~ January 19
- UMCOR Sunday ~ March 30
- Native American Ministries Sunday ~ May 4
- Peace with Justice Sunday ~ June 15
- World Communion Sunday ~ October 5
- United Methodist Student ~ November 30

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

Clear Lake

Jan 5th	Reader: Alison Blanchard Acolyte/PwrPt: Ben Avery Jr Brunch: No coffee or potluck
Jan 12th	Reader: Diane Blanchard Acolyte/PwrPt: Lily Avery Coffee: Roger & Diane
Jan 19th	Reader: Dawn Cress Acolyte/PwrPt: Oliver Wood Coffee: Roger & Diane
Jan 26th	Reader: Andrea Jilek Acolyte/PwrPt: Oliver Gorres Coffee: Roger & Diane
Feb 2nd	Reader: John Koerper Acolyte/PwrPt: Jordan Blanchard Potluck: Gail Kuhl

Counters for January: Carla & Diane
Counters for February: Debi & Dawn

Faith Family

Jan 5th	Terri Wilson
Jan 12th	Paul Webster
Jan 19th	Terri Wilson
Jan 26th	Paul Webster

Willow River Parish Youth packed college boxes! Thanks for all the donations! We sent out eleven boxes to our students and one student Sunshine box- they appreciated all the treats!

Youth and family snow tubing at Trollhaugen from 2-4 pm on Sunday, January 26th. Please RSVP with Erin Gorres @ 651-315-3302.

Youth rang bells at Nilssen's Market, Wednesday, Dec. 4, had pizza and packed college boxes.



February Newsletter Deadline is Jan. 27th



Happy New Year!

The year 2025 has begun. While we greet one another with “Happy New Year,” wishing for only happiness in our lives, there are often times when life does not turn out that way.

Personally, I have been spending these days with a heavy heart, mourning the victims of the recent tragedy at Muan International Airport in South Korea, as the country observes a national mourning period until January 4.

At the beginning of a new year, people often reflect on the past year and, based on those reflections, set new goals and resolutions for the year ahead.

Our Parish completed the Charge Conference in December, with D.S. Peace presiding. Many things were shared and discussed during that meeting. Two points, in particular, stood out to me. The first was hearing someone say, “Our church is not growing. We are not growing.” In response, the D.S. asked you what made you feel that way. I assume your perception of “not growing” was largely based on visible aspects like worship attendance and church finances. I don’t believe the D.S. asked this because he didn’t understand how you felt. Rather, I interpreted his question as an invitation to broaden your perspective on church growth beyond just visible factors.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says to His disciple Peter, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...” This verse marks the first mention of the word “church” in the Bible, as terms like “synagogue” or “temple” were more commonly used during that time. The “rock” Jesus refers to signifies the faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The church is built upon this invisible foundation of faith. Therefore, when we talk about the growth of a church, we should consider not only visible aspects but also invisible ones.

I encourage you to reflect on these questions: How has your faith and your spiritual journey grown during 2024? And what plans do you have for your journey of faith in 2025?

As your pastor, I am already well aware of the concerns you carry. However, I believe that simply being concerned is not enough. In 2025, I kindly ask all of us to honestly present all our worries to God, lay them down in prayer, and actively take steps where we can. While it is undeniable that many churches are experiencing stagnant or declining attendance, not all churches are facing this trend.

We must reflect deeply and practically about our church: Why are some churches in our community experiencing growth regarding worship attendance? Why might younger people lack interest in church? What impression would new visitors have of our church? If your spouse, children, or grandchildren are church members but do not attend regularly, why is that? How can we invite them back? What kinds of people live in our local community? If young people are not drawn to our church, could we target those in their 60s and 70s instead? Why don’t some of our ministry activities seem to translate into increased attendance?

The second point that stood out to me at the Charge Conference was this question: “Why should we reimburse our pastor’s mileage when he is involved in ministries for the district or conference rather than our parish?” I truly appreciated this question because it encapsulates many foundational aspects of Methodism, such as connectionalism, itineration, apportionments, sacraments, social holiness, and continuing education.

We are Methodists, and our three churches belong to the United Methodist Church (UMC). As you know, the UMC operates under an appointment system, unlike some other denominations where congregations hire pastors directly. This means pastors are assigned to local churches by the bishop and the Cabinet through their deliberations. This appointment system applies not only to pastors but also to District Superintendents and even bishops. For instance, Bishop Dan Schwerin was newly appointed to our conference under this system.

This system reflects our belief that we are connected as one body of Christ, rather than separate entities. This is known as connectionalism. As the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, “Just as a body,

though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” This reminds us that the Church is not an isolated collection of individuals, but a united body in Christ, deeply interconnected in mission and purpose. We are connected to other UMC churches, the district, the conference, and even the jurisdiction. When we are connected as one body, we can have a broader and greater impact on society than any single local church could achieve alone. Other UMC churches are not “others”; they are also our churches. The district is not “others”, but our district, and the conference is not “others,” but our conference.

Through apportionments based on connectionalism, each local church supports the ministries of the conference and district. These apportionments fund various ministries, including training for pastors and laity, supporting overseas missionaries, disaster relief, scholarships for students, camp ministries, and efforts for global peace. Connectionalism is the foundation for sustaining these ministries, and it is also an essential part of participating in sacraments and practicing social holiness.

I understand it may feel like the ministries of the conference and district are unrelated to you. If so, I kindly ask you to pay closer attention to and engage with their activities. Our conference needs not only apportionments but also the help and support of clergy and laity members.

I currently serve in several roles within the conference, not because I sought them out but because they had remained vacant for years, and the conference requested my help. While I initially felt burdened by these responsibilities on top of serving three churches, I now serve with a heart grounded in connectionalism. My work in these roles is not for my personal benefit but to serve as a member of the conference, in response to its request.

When a pastor is appointed to a local church under the bishop’s direction, it is expected that the congregation will support the pastor’s ministry. Additionally, a pastor’s appropriate use of time for continuing education, self-care, Sabbath, and vacation ultimately connects to the benefit of the church as well. Through continuing education, pastors grow in their ministry, and when they are healthy, they can better care for and guide their congregations.

Our shared mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. To fulfill this mission and to build the Kingdom of God on earth, I kindly ask our parish to take a long-term perspective and offer support in alignment with connectionalism.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God guide us as we grow deeper in connection with one another and with God. Let us go forth with hope and joy, knowing that we are all part of Christ’s body. Amen.

Pastor Hakki

Deer Park UMC News

Send Offering to: Janice Thompson, 110 North Street E, Deer Park, WI 54007

Noisy Can--1st Quarter to Various Charities

Clear Lake UMC News

- Coffee and pot luck **BEFORE** church at 10:15
- Potluck-1st Sunday of each month **BEFORE** church.
- Food shelf donations any Sunday

Send Offering to: Josy Wood, 260 40th Avenue, Clear Lake, WI 540045

CL Noisy Cans: 1st qtr.- To be determined

Hanging of the Greens



Clear Lake Sunday School Christmas Program

Once Upon a Manger A Brown Bag Christmas Story



Shop with RaiseRight (formerly Scrip): If you want to place a Raise Right order, please contact Andrea Jilek 263-2575. Nilssen's gift cards can be ordered at any time, too.

Clear Lake Church Cancellations: Winter is fast approaching; in the event of bad weather, please contact Roger Blanchard 715-263-2690 or 715-607-4246 to find out if worship services are canceled.

Clear Lake Sunday School is trying something new this year- "Bible in a Binder", Kids can come into church and grab a binder and work on it after the children's sermon. The scripture for the day will be reinforced with what they find in the binder.

Clear Lake United Methodist Church Ad Council did not meet in December. The next meeting is January 8, 2025 at 4:00 PM.

Bell Choir: Concert on Sunday, January 5th at 10:00 am at the First Lutheran Church and then we will come back for our service at 11:00am.

We will **not** have potluck on Sunday, Jan. 5th



CL MIA in January

We gave away all the wrapping paper, but are looking for a new location for next time. Donations of hats, gloves of any size or, one-size-fits-all for the next one. Date to be determined.



Dorcas Piecemakers Work Days: On Monday, January 6th we will meet at Irma's for lunch at noon and then sew from 1-3 then Monday, January 20th we will meet from 1:00 -3:00 to sew. All are welcome to join us!

Family House Shelter-Polk/Barron Big News
Whoever would like to donate a meal or dessert in a foil pan, several at church, help yourself and we will send as much as we can in January to help with meals. Thanks to all who made food for the late November pick up, it was greatly appreciated. We have purchased 10 lbs of ground beef to make meals with at church. If anyone would like to cook during our sewing days that would be great! The more the merrier!

United Women in Faith canceled their December Christmas party due to many causes. In January we will meet on Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 2:00 at Ridgeview for an organizational meeting for 2025.

Clear Lake Christmas Cookie and Stuffed Baked Potato Sale: BIG THANK YOU !!

Our annual Christmas Cookie and Baked Potato Sale was another success. Thanks to everyone for their contributions of cookie baking, donations and help.



A Fun day baking together!!

Thank you, Clear Lake UMC members, for the gift card to True Value! I appreciate your thoughtfulness! Happy New Year!

Sincerely, Anitra

Christmas For Children: What a supportive community to be a part of! We have had a very busy and meaningful December. We have just completed our 31st year of Christmas for Children in Clear Lake. On behalf of the Christmas for Children Committee, we would like to say thank you so much for your support to our program. We would like to thank Carla LaBlanc and Roger for all their years of work to start and keep this program going and their ongoing support and advice to Debi and Diane!

We are so grateful and humbled to be a part of a community that is so compassionate, caring, and generous.

We could not do this program successfully without the help and support from your donations. We use monetary donations to buy clothes, coats, snow pants, boots, and other clothing gifts for the children.

This year we helped 44 families, (108 children). Every child gets warm outdoor clothing and boots if needed. We also provide an outfit of clothes. We always try to give some toys, games, and personal care items.

Each family also gets a large food box from the Lifeline Food Pantry. We thank all of you for helping us to make this a Merry Christmas for these families.

Happy New Year and we wish you God's Peace, Joy and Blessings in 2025.

Ivan Ruble, son of Steve and Sue Ruble graduated from UW-Eau Claire on Saturday, December 21st. Ivan graduated with a Major in Criminal Justice and a Minor in Psychology. He also was a member of the UWEC Football team where he was twice named to the WIAC All Conference Team. Ivan will be working for Englebert Training Systems (ETS).



Faith Family Church News:

Community Service:

Food Pantry: We continue to support our local food pantry. Thank you to those that have donated food/hygiene items/etc and taken your time to deliver these items over the course of the last year.

Garage Sale: We hosted our annual Garage Sale Nov 22, 23, 24. Thank you to those that donated and took time to sit at the sale. We appreciate you.

Little Library: Let's fill up our little library again for the community.

STAY TUNED:

1. Valentine's Day is soon, please start thinking of people we can bless with a Valentine's Card/Box.
2. Pancake breakfast is on hold until Spring
3. Continue to pray about dedicating the new Veterans Park area.
4. **NEXT AD BOARD MEETING:**
January 16th 6:30 pm via Zoom

Warner Sister Update:



Penny Warner: Penny is currently doing rehab in Wabasha at a Health Center to get her strength up and is scheduled for her 2nd Chemo in January. She has been spending much of her time recovering and getting stronger from her first chemo that happened in November.

Debbie (Warner) Stevens: Debbie graduated from her PT/OT and continues to make strides toward healing. Her most recent PET scan showed little/no residual signs of the original mass in her lungs. (yay!) She will continue her chemo treatment and be able to have a "Chemo Holiday" (no treatment) when she travels to Florida in March.

They both would like to say thank you for the prayers, thoughts, cards, gifts, etc. God is good!

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK:

[Faith Family Church | Facebook](#)

Fun Day School Kids:

Great Job, kids, on the Christmas Program! We had so much lovely music from a saxophone solo, bells and vocalists. Thank you for taking us back in time on the Time Machine Talk Show to share the story of Jesus's birth. Everyone was amazing!



COMMUNITY SERVICE: Donations for children's toys/activity books/etc will be brought to Ronald McDonald's House at Children's in St. Paul. If you still want to donate drop them off at church!

Thank you to all that worked on our charge conference forms!

Community Events:

Thank you to all that participated in the Emerald Holiday; it was a great event that provided fun for the kids in the community. There were just under 50 people that participated on that snowy/icy day!

Next Community Event will be the Saturday before Easter. Be thinking about donations for the Easter Basket or even a bike. Last year there were about 100 kids that came to town and got candy and/or a basket from the Easter Bunny. We will likely be packing baskets at the church again this year.

Noisy Can—Let's talk about this at our next meeting!

Send Offering to: Terri Wilson: 3127 200th Ave
Glenwood City, WI 54013

Can 2025 Be a Year of Grace?

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”—2 Corinthians 12:9

When I was a teenager, a United Methodist pastor explained grace to me. It changed my life. That same grace continues to change my life. How has grace shaped your life? How do you continue to struggle with grace?

Grace is the unmerited, upbuilding, unconditional love God extends to all people and to the whole creation. United Methodists have an expansive view of grace. We know that grace is always among us, working in love.

United Methodists are a Baskin-Robbins of grace. We proclaim the grace that God gives us before we even know we need it or know how to ask; this is prevenient grace. We proclaim the grace of God for us and for our healing with God; this is justifying grace. The upbuilding grace that attends to growth in love within us is sanctifying grace. Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Our whole lives are a response to grace. I write today to invite you to observe 2025 as a year of grace.

It is a basic truth of ministry that what you pay attention to grows. If we pay attention to mission, mission grows. Attend to Christian formation and knowledge grows. How might we be changed if we focused our lives more and more on grace? What if we used grace sightings in our devotionals and sermons? Or how might we be renewed if we sing about grace?

What if we practiced a grace that allows us to demonstrate our unity in Christ as a faith community? Currently, we live in a moment when powerful moneyed forces have divided this country. I believe this is an opportunity to make grace greater than our differences. I would want us to be clear that we are not proffering cheap grace for bullying, manipulation, or accommodating bad behavior that is harmful or abusive. Grace and repentance are sisters and should travel together, for grace without authentic repentance is abuse.

What if our personal anti-racism work featured grace-grounded reflection and honest conversations about blind spots and grace for others, and grace for deeper conversations and then action? What if grace called us all to grow in

cultural competency so that we might grow in faith together?

What would happen to us if we framed mission by showing grace in our communities and world? Instead of focusing only on business at our council meetings, we might ask, where did we see grace today? How might we practice grace and extend grace to more and more in our community? Or where is grace leading our congregation now?

I will be keeping a grace journal just to see what God will do.

For the days ahead, I will remind us that grace is also for the stranger and sojourner in our land. Leviticus 19:33-34 reminds us, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Next year we will enjoy a year of experimentation for mission as we try new forms of ministry for impact. Some 54% percent of Northern Illinois United Methodist congregations and 60% of Wisconsin United Methodist churches have a weekly worship attendance of 35 people or fewer. Next year we will need grace for experimentation as churches yield to God’s call forward in new ways.

Every day the ministry holds risk and learning from experiments. We will need to experiment with new forms of ministry and offer support to local churches for their ministry as they try to respond to their post-COVID context. We need to turn our systems toward learning and sharing so that we can support local church vitality as fully as possible. What will be the impact of having two conferences—the whole episcopal area—attend to a focus on grace? Our annual conferences will celebrate the theme “Grace is Sufficient” and continue it through the end of 2025.

My life was changed by grace and it continues to be changed. I believe people are looking for grace and bearers of a God working in love. I pray that a year of grace will deepen and strengthen us. Let’s try it!

Peace, Dan Schwerin, Bishop



THE WILLOW RIVER PARISH
CLEAR LAKE, DEER PARK, FAITH FAMILY
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CLEAR LAKE, WI. 54005-0269

Address Service Requested

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Website: www.willowriverparish.org

Willow River Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/Willow-River-Parish-103076225619623/>

Hakki Min, Pastor
Office Hours: Tues-Friday 9-11 am

Anitra Kaczmariski, Parish Secretary
Email: wrpsecretary@gmail.com

Amanda Millermon, Parish Treasurer
Email: WRParishconnect@gmail.com

Sunday Worship
8:30 a.m. – Faith Family (also Zoom) 9:45 a.m. – Deer Park
11:00 a.m. – Clear Lake

Church School @ Faith Family & Clear Lake
“Fun Day” School–Wednesdays 7 pm @ Faith Family
Bible in a Binder Sundays @ Clear Lake