

The First United Methodist Church of Lowell

Tele-Christian December 2023 Edition

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to
make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Mark's Remarks...



Don't you hate to wait? We wait in lines all the time...at the doctor's office, at the store, at the amusement park. It seems we spend way too long waiting. But that is what Advent is all about. We're waiting for a King. I read a reflection by David Bennett that I would like to share with you.

"You think we have it rough? How about waiting thousands of years, not for something minor like groceries, but for the king whose eternal reign would end the oppression of the world? What do we think about thousands of people hoping and praying fervently for something miraculous to happen, while successive generations are born and pass away, without a hint of fulfillment?"

I am speaking here of the ancient Hebrew patriarchs, kings, prophets, and priests, who waited expectantly for the coming of the Messiah. The prophet Isaiah expresses this hope: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD (Isaiah 2:2-5, RSV).

Then, hundreds of years later, born in Bethlehem, a small town in the Roman Empire, their hope is finally realized. But there is a twist, because Jesus is not the earthly warrior-king many expected. And even after waiting, the final realization of the Messiah's eternal reign is still yet to be seen. It is coming in the future, when the baby born in Bethlehem returns in power to judge the living and the dead. All of this makes our own waiting seem pretty insignificant. Somehow waiting five extra minutes for a dried out bun and a tiny piece of meat from a fast-food restaurant seems pretty trivial.

During the Advent season we symbolically participate in the waiting of the patriarchs, kings, prophets, and priests, as we await Christ's final and glorious return. Through prayer, worship, Communion, and the symbols of Advent, we groan with Isaiah for a day when weapons will be turned into agricultural instruments. We cry out with Zechariah, rejoicing that the dawn from on high is breaking upon us. We pray with the likes of Adam, Job, Hannah, Solomon, Micah, and millions of others, named and unnamed, many whose expectations of the future kingdom may have been hazy, yet who still yearned for something more complete and more "real" than what they knew."

Are you ready to wait this Advent? Will you turn your heart to await the coming reign of Christ, or will your focus be the wait at the mall, the wait for Christmas dinner to cook, the wait for family to arrive....?



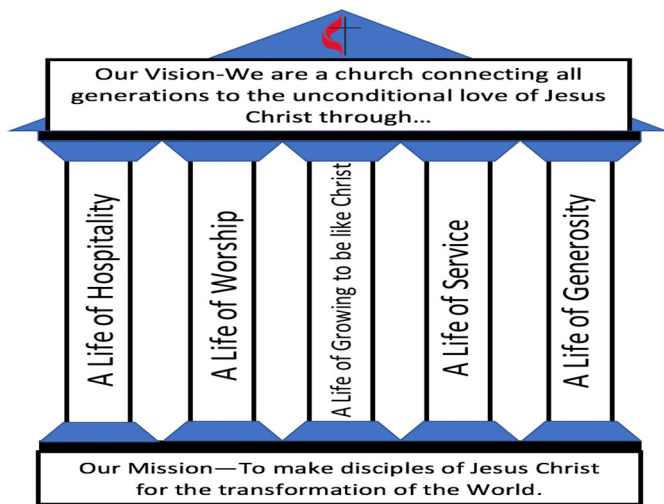
Sermons for December

Throughout December, our sermons will focus on the themes of each Sunday; Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. What do these words mean for your Christmas? What do they mean for your life?



December Sermon Title and Scripture Schedule

December 3 ~	Scripture: Luke 1:5-18	Sermon Title: ' <i>Hope, God Listens</i> '
December 10 ~	Scripture: John 1:1-14	Sermon Title: ' <i>Peace, God Is</i> '
December 17 ~	Scripture: 1 John 4:13-19	Sermon Title: ' <i>Joy, God Loves</i> '
December 24 ~	Scripture: Luke 1:26-35	Sermon Title: ' <i>Love, God Shares</i> '
December 31 ~	Scripture: Luke 2:22-35	Sermon Title: ' <i>Rejoice!</i> '



This image represents our church. It is built on the Mission to make disciples for Jesus, sheltered by a Vision of unconditional love for all, and supported by five Pillars of Discipleship: HOSPITALITY, WORSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, SERVICE, and GENEROSITY.



Look for this small image of a pillar throughout this newsletter. A small pillar image means the article relates to one of our Pillars of Discipleship. It means the article tells you how we are moving toward achieving our Mission and working at keeping our church relevant and alive for future generations.



Worship News

Trudy Corning and Linda Hayden, Co-Chairs

Mark your calendars! Hanging of the Greens will be Friday, December 1 at 9:00am. All are welcome! Come enjoy fellowship as we decorate our church for the Advent season! Many hands will make light work!

We will again adorn our sanctuary with beautiful **poinsettias** this holiday season! You will have an opportunity to purchase poinsettias in honor of or in remembrance of a loved one, or to the glory of God! Order envelopes will be in the Sunday bulletin on December 3 & 10 or call the church office. The cost is \$10 per plant and payment is due when the order is placed. All orders need to be placed by Monday, December 11. The poinsettias will be in the sanctuary starting Sunday, December 17 and will be available to take home after the 11:00pm Christmas Eve Service.

Come, join us for worship and prepare your heart for the birth of our Savior this Advent season.

Worship at 8:00

December 3, 10, 17 These will be our last 8:00 services until the park service starts in June.

Worship at 10:30

December 3 See and hear Godsbells.

December 10 Experience the ***Children's Christmas program***. The title of this year's program is 'The Totally Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant What Could Go Wrong', written by Pastor Mark. The first practice will be the presentation. Come for the unpolished fun pageant! We need all the children of the church and even your grandchildren who don't attend our church to be here that day.

December 17 The Chancel Choir will present the Cantata ***"A New & Glorious Morn! Celebrating the Light and Life of Christmas"*** by Lloyd Larson.

Worship at 9:30

December 24 & 31 Our new worship schedule will begin. Martha's Coffee House will be open both before and after the service. Stop in to enjoy fellowship with your church family and light refreshments.

Two Christmas Eve Services

7:00 PM Family service. It will have an extended children's story, special music, the Christmas story, favorite carols, and a candlelight closing as we sing '*Silent Night*'.

11:00 PM A candlelight Communion service. There will be special music, carols, Communion together, lighting candles and singing '*Silent Night*'.

Join us for one or both of these services as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

*God is home! This Advent season our beautiful stained glass windows will be illuminated!
Let the light of our Savior shine into our community for all to see!*



LYFT is our Thursday evening worship service. We start at 5:30 pm with dinner and go right into worship at 6 pm. Worship includes music, a lay speaker or Pastor Mark speaking, prayer and ends with communion. LYFT is a casual worship service where we look forward each week to food, fellowship and fun! Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend!

LYFT gets transformed into Messy Church on the fourth Thursday of each month. Do you know what 'Messy Church' is? We really don't get dirty or messy, it is just another way to say that we are doing church a little differently than normal. We start out as usual with dinner. After dinner, Pastor Mark divides us into 4 groups. The size of the groups depends on how many people are at LYFT that night, but it is usually around 6 per group. There is no communion or speaker on 'Messy Church' night. Try it you might like it!

The four stations that we have at 'Messy Church' are:

1. Dessert station
2. Craft or Mission station
3. Discussion station (with Pastor Mark)
4. Game station

****LYFT will be taking a Christmas break Thursday, December 21 and 28. See you next year on Jan. 4.**



WHERE HE LEADS US

The new year in the church begins with the first Sunday of Advent. In the new year our church will have a theme for the year. We are going to focus on what God is calling us to do as a church. We already have some changes planned to move us in a healthier direction. Whatever further changes and calling God places on us, our response will hopefully be: Where He leads us, we will follow.

This theme is based on the hymn "Where He Leads Me" by Ernest W. Blandly. The chorus is:

*Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow.
Where He leads me I will follow; I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.*

The hymn is based on the scripture "If anyone would come after me, he must take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34). The future is going to be an adventure for us.



MOVE TO ONE WORSHIP SERVICE

Don't forget, starting on Christmas Eve, December 24 we will have **one worship service that will meet at 9:30 am. From that date on we'll have one service at 9:30 am.** Children's Sunday School will continue to meet during the worship time. Adult Sunday School will meet before or after the 9:30 worship. In the summer we'll still have an 8 am service in the park. More information on that summer service will come later.



GIFT CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS As we have in the past, the church will sell Gift Cards this holiday season. This program is a fund-raiser — the church receives a percentage of the value of each gift card purchased. An order form is attached to the newsletter and will also be available in the church Narthex and in the worship bulletins on December 3 and 10. Payment is due with the order form. We will be placing two orders for gift cards. Your paid orders must be in the office by 10 a.m. on either Monday, December 4 or Monday, December 11. Gift cards are usually available to be picked up in the office 3-4 days following the order date. The office will contact anyone who ordered and let them know their cards are in. If you have questions please call Kim in the church office.



The UFW will have a Cookie Walk Saturday, December 2 from 2-6 pm as part of the *Winterfest* activities. Cookies will be sold for \$5 a pound. There will be a wide variety of cookies to choose from. Hot Chocolate will be available for \$1 with all the fixings.

Proceeds will go to UFW missions locally, statewide, nationally, and worldwide.

Rachelle Ruge-Bernard, UFW President

***Other *Winterfest* activities and times are attached to this e-mail.

Women's Bible Study



Ladies, are you looking for a small group to gather with during those gloomy days of winter? Starting on January 8 at 3:00 we will be gathering together to take a "deep dive" into Ephesians. We will spend 9 weeks working through the book Included in Christ—Living a New Story from Ephesians by Heather Holleman. If you are interested please let the office know by December 18 so the books can be ordered. The cost of each book is \$11. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to one of us! Hope to see many of you on January 8! Kim McGinley and Laura Eller, Study Facilitators



A "Moment to Express Gratitude"

Finance Team

Your Finance Team is reaching out to our church family to thank all of you for submitting your 2024 pledge commitments towards the future missions and ministries embraced by the FUMC family. Anytime you give an offering to God, it represents three kinds of gratitude: past, present, and future. Your offering shows gratitude for God's blessing in the past and his blessing today and faith in God's continued blessing in the future. God always honors faith with his blessing.

In the Bible, there are more promises attached to faithful giving and generosity than any other subject. Why? Because God wants his children to be like him. And he is a generous God!

Jesus says in Luke 6:38, "If you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you"

Your offering shows God that you trust him for all things and at all times.



It's not too late to think about saving taxes for 2023! Or too early to think about 2024!

Are you over 70 ½? and Do you have a traditional IRA?

You can do non-taxable distributions from your IRA, save federal and state income taxes and contribute to your church...ALL at the same time!!!

There are specific guidelines to follow, so talk to your tax preparer/accountant and/or your investment counselor.

Ask these questions: 1. What is my RMD (Required Minimum Distribution)? 2. How can I gift my RMD and/or more to my church? 3. How can I send monthly tax-free withdrawals to my church? 4. How does it save federal and state income taxes? 5. How can I prepare for my 2023 and/or 2024 taxes?

Hope you have a blessed December with reduced 2023 taxes and a blessed 2024!



THANK YOU!

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for your love and support before, during, and after my surgery. The fleece prayer blanket physically warmed my body, while your prayers, cards, calls and acts of kindness warmed my heart and soul. I am so grateful to all of you.

Blessings to all,
Bev Kussy



Dear Methodist Church,

Thank you for the clothing. You are always so good to our students. We all appreciate all the things you bring us. Thank you!

Nurse Peggy
Three Creeks Elementary



We want to thank all who helped make the Veterans Day celebration so great. Good food, good memories shared and a good time. Also, thanks to Tom Sufana for a delicious Thanksgiving dinner at LYFT and to AL Martin for a thought provoking message.

Don and Paula Tilton



Thank you to all for supporting our college box ministry. Your generous donations, notes of encouragement and prayers were greatly appreciated! The college finals boxes were packed and prayed over Sunday, November 19 and are ready for shipping. Please continue to pray for this ministry and especially the college students as they receive their package and prepare for finals week. The eight students receiving boxes are: **Hailey Adcock, Caleb Bernard, Keeley Bernard, Adam Fucela,**



I'm the church mouse. I see all that goes on in the church and I love to gossip about it. Of course being a Christian mouse, I only say positive things.

Boy, a lot of missions take place at this time of year! How many people filled shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse? Most of the tags have disappeared from the Christmas Clothesline to provide presents for needy children in our community.

We reach out in love to our own members, as I spy around. We send cards to our members having milestone birthdays. We send care packages to our college students. We send cards to those who are sick or recovering from surgeries. Phyllis DeFrance provided a wonderful meal for our veterans. She had so many folks helping her and new ideas that added to the day. Our veterans deserve recognition!

Be careful when you do good work for the church. I'm watching and just waiting to share that gossip.



Welcome to our New Members

On November 19, Pastor Mark held a membership class. November 26 at the 10:30 am service, six people officially became members by transfer of membership or profession of faith! Please welcome:

**Jack and Roxane Anderson, Lori Harvey,
Ed Miller and Gary and Judy Williams**

as the newest members of our church family!!

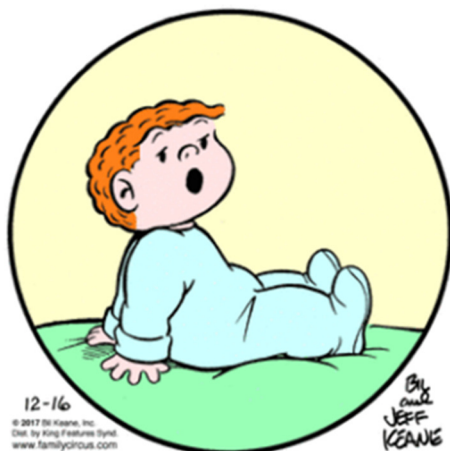


Young at Heart Sr. Bingo will take December off. Have a blessed Christmas!



Pastor's Comic Corner

In case you haven't noticed, I love humor. Below are comics that I've come across. Enjoy and smile! Pastor Mark



"Mommy, who is Christmas Carol?"



You two quit it or I'm turning this caravan right around!

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday - Worship ~ 8 & 10:30 a.m. (in Sanctuary), **Monday/Tuesday** - A/A 12 p.m. (303) **Wednesday** - A/A - 8 p.m. (Fellowship Hall), Al/Anon - 8 p.m. (library) **Thursday** - Dulcimers 10 am (303), Godsbells practice 4:30 pm (balcony), *LYFT* Dinner 5:30 p.m./Worship 6:00 p.m. (Fellowship Hall), Chancel Choir 7 p.m. (Sanctuary) **Saturday** - A/A 11 a.m. (303)

December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Hanging of the Greens 9 am Organ Tuned 1pm	2 Winterfest 2-6 pm
3 Tri-Kappa Wreath Sale 1-3 (carport)	4	5	6 UWF Exec. Meeting 4:30 pm (library)	7 LYFT Speaker: Rick Bachman Menu: Pizza	8	9
10 Children's Program at 10:30 am service Youth Group 5:30 pm	11 Susanna Wesley Circle @ Betty's 1pm	12	13	14 LYFT Speaker: Al Martin Menu: Christmas	15	16
17 Christmas Cantata @ 10:30 am service	18	19	20	21 NO LYFT Christmas Break	22	23 Baby Shower (FH)
24 New Service Time Starts 9:30 am Christmas Eve Services 7 and 11 pm	25 Merry Christmas Office Closed	26	27	28 NO LYFT Christmas Break	29	30
31 One Service 9:30 am	1 New Year's Day Office Closed					