

The First Connection

December 2023

a publication of
Mason First United Methodist Church
Growing in Faith, Serving Others, Sharing the Love of Christ

Christmas
Worship Opportunities

December Noisy Bucket

Thanks for Serving!

A Year of Generosity

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Let there be Peace on Earth

Each year, something new resonates for me in the telling of the Christmas story which actually stretches back over 700 years to the time of Isaiah when the people of Israel were in a time of deep darkness and despair. In those times Isaiah spoke of a coming Savior, one who would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. It must have seemed like music to their ears, and relief for their hearts.

We can relate. Although we have many blessings to be thankful for, we are seeing too much going on in the world around us to feel truly *at peace*. Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Hamas, democrats and republicans, haves and have nots, residents and immigrants, gun violence in places we should feel safe, and the list goes on and on. Everyone feels compelled to draw a line in the sand and take their stand in opposition to the very people we are called to love as neighbor. We could use a good, healthy dose of Peace on Earth right about now. Where is the everlasting peace of which Isaiah prophesied? Do we even believe in peace anymore?

This season of Advent when we remember the Christ who came, and look forward to his coming again, we have to ask ourselves if we've ever truly made a commitment to follow this Prince of Peace and, as John Lennon sang, *give peace a chance*. Peace will not come on its own. We have to make a commitment every day to be bringers of peace by the way we conduct ourselves, by the conversations we have, and by the way we bring a message of peace and hope to the community we serve. The Prince of Peace has come and given us a roadmap to everlasting and just peace. We just need to follow it!

In this Advent season, let there be Peace on Earth... and let it begin with us! Have a blessed Advent season and a wonderful Christmas!

Pastor Suzanne

Join us during this season Advent as we seek peace together.

- Sunday morning worship 9:30 a.m.
- Blue Christmas Service of Healing Tuesday, December 19 at 7:00 p.m.
- Christmas Eve Family worship at 9:30 a.m. Candlelight Service at 7:00 p.m.



COME TO THE MANGER

Advent by Candlelight

Thursday, December 14 at 6:00 p.m.

6:00 Wassail gathering in the Atrium
6:30 Advent Service for Women
7:15 Dessert Tea in Fellowship Hall

We cordially invite all women to a new event this year! Advent by Candlelight is an occasion for women of all ages to gather and experience a moment of Advent holiness in a peaceful and lovely candlelit setting. The evening will begin with a wassail gathering in our atrium. Then we will proceed to the Sanctuary for a short service of worship featuring music and thoughtful messages of hope. Afterwards, we will make our way to Fellowship Hall for a dessert tea in a beautifully decorated setting. Women may host a table using their own creativity and personal Christmas decorations. It is our hope that you will invite friends and acquaintances from outside the church so that we may be a full gathering of women experiencing the joy and peace of the season together.

Make a reservation at the Connection Point or by calling the church office and we will find a table for you! Don't forget to invite a friend! Reservations are necessary so that we may make sure that everyone has a seat at a table.

Blue Christmas

A Service of Healing and Hope

Tuesday, December 19 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve

*Candlelight
Worship*

Dec. 24, 7:00 p.m.

Living Nativity

Saturday, December 9 5:30-8:30

Share the Love this

**Christmas
Season**

Invite

Your Friends and
Neighbors

Christmas Eve Morning
Family-Friendly Christmas
Worship at 9:30 a.m.

Christmas Eve Night
Candlelight Service
of Lessons and Carols
at 7:00 p.m.

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

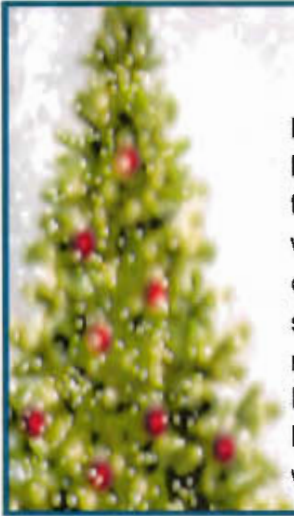


Our Noi\$y Bucket offering this December is in



support of Missionary, Princess Jusu. Princess M. Jusu is a missionary with the Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church serving in Monrovia, Liberia, as an instructor at the United Methodist Women's Leadership Training Center. "I am hopeful and prayerful that my service will be one that contributes to a more positive environment and will be productive for the women and children that I can assist while on assignment." - Princess Jusu.

The Missions Team will meet again on **January 11 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall to plan for Night of a Thousand Blessings.



White Christmas Gifts

FUMC and the Mission Team are once again bringing Christmas to families in need through White Christmas gift giving. If you wish to donate, choose a tag from the tree outside the Fellowship Hall, then sign the sheet on the table next to the tree. If you'd rather not shop, donations can be made to FUMC with "White Christmas" in the memo line. Bring your wrapped gifts to the church with the tag on them by December 17.



Purchase \$10 donation cards at your local Meijer to provide food to families in your community at Mason Food Bank now until December 30.

Double Match Day* Sat., Dec. 16— For every \$10 donation made, Meijer will contribute \$20, resulting in a total \$30

Thank you for a wonderful month of serving others!

INGATHERING

With your generosity during Ingiving, we donated over 470 lbs. of food to our Tiny Pantry and the Mason Food Bank. We'd especially like to thank Dennis Quinn, Ruth Waltz, Doug Cole, and Tim Crandall for sorting and delivering your donations.

Thank you to Bud and Rece Arehart and friends for organizing and running the Warming Station during the Electric Light parade!



BREAKFAST With Santa

It was a banner year for Breakfast with Santa as this has become a season favorite for many families in our community. Dennis Howe and his kitchen crew did a great job serving pancakes to almost 200 hungry people Saturday morning. A huge thank you to the many people who helped make this event successful! Also, thank you to all of you who donated items for Santa's Workshop. The children were very excited to find the perfect gifts for their loved ones. Thanks to some very generous donations, a little over \$800 was added to our mission trip fund!



Coats for Kids

October's coat drive brought in 673 local community members who received 1437 coats and 259 pairs of snowpants. This event has been growing in popularity ever since it started back in 2011. Area churches have come together to once again keep our community safe and warm!



GIFTS AND SERVICE



A Note from the Finance Committee

Happy Holidays! The end of the year is fast approaching and I wanted to give everyone a quick update of the Church's finances.

On the whole, we are doing OK! Everyone works very hard to be sure that your tithes and offerings get spent as frugally as possible. However, the Operating Fund balance (what the Church uses to pay bills such as salary, heat, water, etc.) can always use additional income. We would like to start off 2024 on very solid footing and if you can help, please consider adding a "little something extra" to your pledge this month.

Thank you for your continued generosity!

Please note: In order for your donation to be counted in 2023, it will need to be received in the Church office by December 27th. Donations received after that date will be counted for 2024. Thank you!

Kim Wolfgang
Finance Committee Chairperson



United Women in Faith

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." Galatians 5:13

2023 is coming to a close and it has been a very eventful year. We did very well on our money-making events and we will be able to donate to several worthy causes. If you have any suggestions of a charitable organization you'd like to support, please talk with me or someone on the UWF Board.

Our 2023 programs went well. The Lenten Breakfast held April 1 was well attended by our members and several other churches were represented. Everyone also enjoyed our May 18 Lavender and Lace Luncheon. Gerry Tibbits' program October 19 "A Crisis on the Border" was very informative. If you missed it, please take a minute and read the summary that Pastor Suzanne wrote in the November newsletter.

We are starting to plan our 2024 programs and have scheduled a Unit meeting for Tuesday, December 12 at 10:00 a.m. in the fellowship hall. We will be discussing the future of UWF and we look forward to hearing your suggestions and ideas for upcoming programs and circle meetings. We all need to work together in 2024.

Advent by Candlelight will be held on Thursday, December 14, at 6:00 p.m. It will be an evening of worship and fellowship for women. Please invite your friends. Pastor Suzanne will be leading this event and I'm sure you will find it an evening of friendship, fellowship, and dessert along with a thoughtful message of hope.

Your UWF President,
Claudia Ireland

PLEDGE UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a pledge card. We are still accepting those if you have not had a chance to fill one out. There are extras available in the church office or at the Connection Point. Sarah will have envelopes ready for pick up soon.

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

Each year we take a special Christmas offering on Christmas Eve that we set aside and use for a special purpose—often times the gift is split between identified mission need and something that we need to do for the church.

After a very generous year of missional giving on so many fronts, what we really need this year is money for putting a new roof on our sanctuary, and money to shore up our operating budget which has taken a hard hit over this past year of inflated operating expenses.

You will be receiving a special giving envelope in the mail later this month. We thank you for your generosity and your commitment to the mission and ministry of our church. God's blessings on you and your family this Christmas season!



YEAR END GIFTS DEADLINE

We're always grateful to receive your end-of-year contributions and gifts. Please be aware that in order to be counted in this tax year, all gifts must be received by 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 28 so that we have time to count, post, and deposit. As always, thank you for your generosity!

AROUND THE CHURCH

Wednesday Bible Study

New books have arrived for a new year of Bible Study! Our group meets weekly to read together *The Disciplined Disciple*. Drop in any time to read scripture and discuss its meaning. Whether you are just starting out in your faith journey or have been pursuing it for years, we'd love to have you! Anyone, at any stage of faith can experience growth from these spiritual disciplines. We meet **every Wednesday**, from **10:30– 11:30 a.m.** in the library.



HERE'S TO THE LADIES WHO QUILT!

(AND YOU CAN BE ONE TOO!)

Most Wednesday afternoons you can find a group of industrious women elbow-deep in colorful fabrics, piecing together quilt masterpieces that are destined to delight someone who can use some beauty and joy in their lives. If you have some sewing skills—even if you haven't quilted before—please consider joining in to help make quilts for various charities in our area. See Claudia Ireland or Glenda Crider for more information!



The WiredWORD™

Wired Word is an adult Bible study group that utilizes fresh and engaging Bible study materials to tie the Holy Word to our lives today. By relating news events happening here and now, it can make a real difference in your life and spiritual growth.

Join us at **Sundays at 11:00 a.m.** in the Chapel. Everyone is welcome—no preparation necessary.



Join us every 3rd Friday of the month, Our next Euchre Night is on **December 15 at 6:30 p.m.**



Peace on Earth on a Float

Thank you to the creative team of Jeff Lautzenheiser, Bud Arehart, Kim Sperry, David Gunns, and Mark Wolfgang, for designing and building one of the nicest floats in the Electric Light Parade! Thank you to Doug Cole for towing the float, to Ken Carlson for his donation of the trailer, and to Lynn and Trevor Goedert for their appearance as Mary and Joseph!



SHARING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Our Prayers and Healing Wishes to:

- Pat Mentzer, recovering at home following illness
- Marge Talboys, recovering at home following hospitalization
- Ruth Judd, recovering at home following surgery
- Beth Bousfield, having surgery this month
- Jon Droscha, having medical treatment this month
- Sarah Vowels, having medical treatment done this month

Thinking of members/ friends in assisted living, rehab/ nursing facilities, and hospice care:

- Dansville Country Care Assisted Living:
Dick Magsig
- Divine Nest, Leslie: *Joyce Darling*
- Grand Haven Living Center, Lansing:
Marilyn Murthum
- Green Acres, Mason: *Beth Grosshans and Jeanette Strickland*
- Ingham Co. Medical Care Facility, Okemos:
Char Bush and John Dodge
- Island City Assisted Living, Eaton Rapids:
Don Dickinson
- The Willows of Okemos:
Lew Tibbits



Attention All Snowbirds:

Let us know if you will be out of town for an extended period of time! Give us your winter address to keep the newsletters coming.



Do you have a small project to be done or need a ride to an appointment? Contact Helping Hands, led by Brian Hankey. You may call Brian at 517.676.2463 or call the church office at 517.676.9449.



Building Use Tips

Let us know ahead of time when you or your group will be in the building. We will reserve the space, make sure you have heating/cooling, and make sure either the doors are open or someone has a key.



When the weather outside is frightful and schools are closed, our office is closed also. We will work with the City of Mason to open the building as an Emergency – Operation Center as needed. Those in need may come to keep warm, charge phones, and shower.

INCLEMENT
WEATHER POLICY



December Schedules

Many regularly scheduled events have changed for the holiday season!
Here's how to be in-the-know!

Potluck: There will be no potluck on December 26

Wired Word: The last Wired Word class of 2023 will meet on December 17. We will resume on January 7

MOPS: Will enjoy Advent by Candlelight and resume regular meetings in January

UWF: There will not be Circle meetings this month– resume in January

What About the Bible?: Will not meet on December 17– see you January 21

Wednesday Bible Study: Will not meet on December 27. We will see you on January 4

Holiday Church Office Hours:

- ◇ On December 22, the office will close at noon
- ◇ December 25: Office closed– Merry Christmas!
- ◇ December 26-29: Office hours: 9 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
- ◇ January 1: Office Closed– Happy New Year!

CHILDREN & YOUTH



IGNITE Youth recently spent time decorating Christmas cookies with the residents at Green Acres. It was a wonderful afternoon enjoyed by all!



MISSION TRIP NEWS

Indianapolis, Indiana is the chosen location for our summer 2024 mission trip! We will pack up and head out from June 23-28 to serve with Group Missions doing community service projects for those in need. Please contact Laurie if you know of a youth who would be interested in this worthwhile venture.

IGNITE Christmas Party

Sunday, December 17
4:00pm-6:00pm

Bring a white elephant gift and your favorite snack to share!

The IGNITE Elves pictured left to right:

Lena Berridge, Miles Dornbush, Sarah Lange, Riley Wooledge, Sophia Lange, Hadley Keith, Cade Schanz, & Colin Sutberry



Nativity Word Search

NATIVITY	NESHT
CHRISTMAS	SHEEP
MANGER	MOTHER
DONKEY	GIFT
STABLE	
DECEMBER	
ANGEL	
SHEPHERD	
BABY	
STAR	



I	O	I	D	O	N	K	E	Y	S
M	N	A	T	I	V	I	T	Y	H
V	V	N	I	G	H	T	D	T	E
D	E	C	E	M	B	E	R	A	P
U	M	A	N	G	E	R	Y	R	H
G	I	F	T	S	T	A	B	L	E
C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	R
G	T	A	A	N	G	E	L	S	D
S	T	A	R	S	H	E	E	P	D
B	A	B	Y	M	O	T	H	E	R

Worship Ques



Christmas is coming! The excitement is building for the children at Mason First as we learn about Advent and what the symbols of the season represent.

Children preschool through 5th grade are welcome to join us downstairs during Sunday morning worship.

Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available upon request. Sierra Zanger, who also works in our daycare center, is our nursery coordinator.



Cade & Teddy look up a Bible verse.



Mason First United Methodist Church

Growing in Faith,
Serving Others,
Sharing the Love of Christ

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www.masonfirst.org

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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
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MASON MI 48854 1775

Return Service Requested

Tuesday, December 12
Thursday, December 14
Sunday, December 17
Tuesday, December 19
Sunday, December 24

***Every Sunday**
***Every Tuesday**
***Every Wednesday**
***Every 3rd Friday**
***Every 4th Tuesday**
***Every 1st & 3rd Friday**

UWF Unit Meeting
Advent by Candlelight
Ignite Christmas Party
Blue Christmas Service
Christmas Eve Service

Wired Word Sunday School
Potluck & Fellowship—Everyone welcome!
Mason First Music Ministry—All musicians welcome!
Euchre Night—All Euchre players welcome!
UWF Circles Meet—All women welcome!
MOPS






December Birthdays



Susan Tuthill.....	2	Irvin Smith	17
Andrea Ruttan.....	6	Tom Harper	18
Barbara Chapman	7	Megan McCully	19
Joyce Darling.....	7	Abigail Day	19
Dennis Whipple	8	Linda Carmer	20
Russell Whipple	8	Brian Ball.....	21
Christopher Spyke.....	8	Easton Newland	21
Charles Reed.....	10	Gordon Richards	24
Ralph McKimmy.....	10	Stephanie Stroud	25
Lori Howe	12	Sandy Demorest.....	25
Janet Magsig.....	12	Shaun Sherwood.....	25
Connie Doss.....	12	Eric Lautzenheiser	28
Glenn Darling.....	13	Jennifer Baker	29
John Lord	14	Gail Ried.....	29
Mark Stroud.....	15	Holly Gardner.....	30
Max Casteel	16	Barry Hedglen	31



Aaron and Kelly Treiber.....	5
Alan and Shelly Heaviland.....	6
Doug and Dawn Cole	16
Wayne and Sharon Sodman.....	27
Jon Droscha and Beth Bousfield ...	28
Jason and Alex Darling.....	28
Gerry and Carole Bosshart.....	29
Dan and Linda Plyler	29
John and Linda Akers	30
Paul and April Kirk.....	30
Roger and Tracey Jewett	31

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 9:30am MOPS, in Youth Room	2
3 9:30am Worship 10:30am Heritage District Conference 11:00am Wired Word Class, in Chapel 3:00pm Ignite, at Green Acres	4	5 5:30pm Potluck, in Fellowship Hall 6:30pm Me, an Evangelist? Book Club, in "Fishbowl"	6 10:30am Bible Study Class, in library 5:30pm Music Ensemble 6:30pm Chancel Ringers 7:30pm Chancel Choir	7	8	9 5:30pm The Living Nativity
10 9:30am Worship 11:00am Wired Word Class, in Chapel	11	12 10:00am UWF Unit Meeting, in Fellowship Hall 5:30pm Potluck, in Fellowship Hall 6:30pm Me, an Evangelist? Book Club, in "Fishbowl"	13 10:30am Bible Study Class, in library 5:30pm Music Ensemble 6:30pm Chancel Ringers 7:30pm Chancel Choir	14 6:00pm Advent By Candlelight	15 6:30pm Euchre, in Fellowship Hall	16 9:30am Ignite: Drop & Shop, in Youth Room
17 9:30am Worship 11:00am Wired Word Class, in Chapel 4:00pm Ignite, in Youth Room	18 5:30pm Alzheimer's Group, in "Fishbowl"	19 5:30pm Potluck, in Fellowship Hall 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service	20 10:30am Bible Study Class, in library 5:30pm Music Ensemble 6:30pm Chancel Ringers 7:30pm Chancel Choir	21	22 Church Office Closes at noon	23
24 11:00am *No Wired Word this week 7:00pm Christmas Eve Worship Service	25 Church Office Closed Merry Christmas! 	26 Church Office Hours 9-1 this week No UWF Circles in December: See you next month! 5:30pm *No Potluck this week	27 Church Office Hours 9-1 this week 10:30am Bible Study Class, in library 5:30pm Music Ensemble 6:30pm Chancel Ringers 7:30pm Chancel Choir	28 Church Office Hours 9-1 this week	29 Church Office Hours 9-1 this week	30
31 11:00am *No Wired Word this week	<i>Happy New Year!</i> 					