

DECEMBER 2025

THE CROWS NEST

SPRINGDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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REBECCA'S REFLECTIONS



The United Methodist Church forms disciples of
Jesus Christ, who empowered by the Holy Spirit,
love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously
in local communities and worldwide connections.

As I watched the snow fall over the weekend, I was reminded of my favorite Christmas carol, "In the Bleak Midwinter" by Christina Rossetti. Written in 1872 and published in Schriber's Monthly, it was then set to music by the composer, Gustav Holst in 1906. The words of the poem tell of the stark reality of Jesus' birth in a cattle shed, with the added elements of a cold winter scene more reminiscent of England than of Bethlehem. While it does snow in Bethlehem, it is never as cold or icy as it was in Christina's home in the 1870's, or for us today. Time, it seems, stands still as we imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and that tiny baby on that night long ago.

There is another part to this carol that sets it apart from other carols. The last verse, full of evangelical piety, acts as a guard against seeing ourselves as greater or of more worth than the Christ Child.

"What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart."

The most important gift that we give is not found on Black Friday or Cyber Monday or any other "made-up holiday". The gift that continues to give and that is the least, yet the greatest, is the giving of ourselves: to God, to Christ, to one another, and to the world. During this advent, take the time to contemplate that last phrase, "Yet what I can I give him, give my heart" means in your life and how you will give of yourself this next year. Have a blessed Advent and a wonderful Christmas.

Rebecca

BIRTHDAYS

3 - Lane Reid
Dylan Whitlatch
4 - Brandi Tisinger
5 - Ronnie Nelson
6 - Jamie Boles
7 - Jessica Nelson
8 - Lexi Clemens
Katelyn Nelson
11 - Amy Budreau
Cooper Hartz
12 - Jordan Vetter
13 - Rachel Richards
17 - Aidan Grace
18 - Nicki Brick
19 - Ashlee Jacobson
20 - Allan Baker
Melissa Grandt
22 - Deana Drumbarger
24 - Vicki Reid
26 - Quinn Kober
28 - Lynne Lundberg
29 - Aiden Richards
30 - Lara Barnhart
Oliver Whitlatch

ANNIVERSARIES

13 - Tim & Michele Miller (11)
30 - Dan & Peggy McElderry (46)
31 - Kevin & Jackie Callahan (21)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 3 Discipleship Night at WBUMC, 5:30 p.m.
December 5 UMW Walking Tacos @ Parkside Auto, 5-8 p.m. **(Baked Goods Needed, individually wrapped)**
December 6 UMW Walking Tacos @ Parkside Auto, 5-8 p.m. **(Baked Goods Needed, individually wrapped)**
December 10 UMW Meeting @ SUMC, 6:30 p.m.
December 14 White Gifts during worship
Bake Sale at Cedar County Lions Christmas Expo 12-4 p.m. **(Baked Goods and Volunteers Needed)**
Blue Christmas Service at WBUMC, 7 p.m.
December 17 Discipleship Night at WBUMC, 5:30 p.m. **(Baked Goods and Servers Needed)**
December 21 Birthday Sunday, Fellowship after worship
Birthday Party for Jesus @ WBUMC 3:00 p.m., caroling to follow
December 22 UMW Bingo @ Crestview 2:30 p.m.
December 24 Christmas Eve Service, 11 p.m.
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DECEMBER WORSHIP

Theme for the Month: Now and Not Yet

December 7

Second Sunday of Advent, Communion Sunday
Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12
Sermon: "Peace is Possible"
Advent Readers: Lynda Ambrose and Julie Mather

December 14

Third Sunday of Advent, White Gifts Sunday
Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:2-11
Sermon: "Joy is Sparked"
Advent Readers: Jo Leighty family

December 21

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Birthday Sunday
Scripture: Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25
Sermon: "Love is Embraced"
Advent Readers: Paula Rogers family

December 24

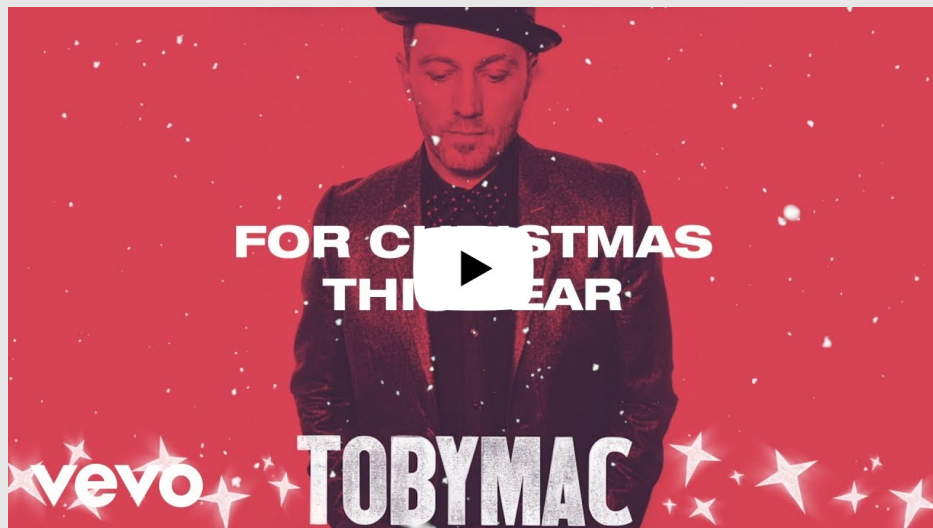
Christmas Eve, Communion
Scripture: Genesis 22:15-18; Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-7, 8-14, 15-20; John 1:1-14
Sermon: "Wonder"
Advent Readers: Steven Grace family

December 28

First Sunday after Christmas, Songs and Snacks, Steven preaching

**Adult Sunday School at 9 a.m.
Wednesday Night Discipleship 5:30 p.m. - WBUMC**

SONG OF THE MONTH



If you would like to bring a poinsettia to church to decorate the sanctuary in memory of or in honor of a loved one, please place them in the upper room on **Saturday, December 13**. Barb will arrange and keep them watered until after Christmas at which time, you are welcome to take them home.

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

This year, our stewardship campaign is a bit different than other years. Steven and Rebecca shared sermons in November that focused on blessings in the past year and what we are thankful for, encouraging people to think about giving and the ways the church has impacted each life in the last year. Then, in January, we will be focusing on our membership vows: Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service, and Witness. We will be looking at ways to share gifts and talents in new ways. There are pledge cards available for persons to fill out at this time and there will be other activities and opportunities in January and the new year. As you plan your new year, consider giving time, talent, and gifts to Springdale UMC as a part of your yearly giving.

SPARK: WHAT SHALL WE BRING?

All of us have favorite Christmas songs, if we haven't grown tired of them, wandering through stores that shift to Christmas music sometime in November. Some songs make me smile because they connect to a happy memory, and others connect me to questions I have not quite resolved. One of those is the carol "In the Bleak Midwinter" verse 4, which asks a question that never grows old: *"What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb."*

That question echoes every Advent and Christmas season, when we find ourselves surrounded by giving lists and wish lists. In the midst of it all, we remember the magi who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—not because Jesus needed them, but because the givers' hearts overflowed with wonder and devotion.

Stewardship begins there. What we bring to God isn't measured by dollar signs or decimal points, but by the love behind it. One gives a tithe faithfully from a paycheck. Another gives time to serve or talent to create beauty in worship. Someone else delivers a dinner to a family who has had a tough year with health issues. Each offering, freely given, becomes a sign of God's generosity at work in us.

So, as this holy season unfolds, let the question linger: What shall we bring? Not to earn God's favor, but to respond to it. For every gift we bring—great or small—joins the chorus of praise that began in Bethlehem.

WEST BRANCH FOOD PANTRY

This year, the COME committee collected items for the West Branch Food Pantry. Collections will continue through 2026 and you can find the collection bin in the foyer of the church. Any items collected will be distributed to the pantry after the 4th Sunday of the month.

December - Soups

Chili kits (beans, tomato juice, hamburger, ground turkey, etc.), Beef Stew, Canned Soups, etc.

January - Soaps

Laundry, dish, body, etc.

February

Diapers, pull ups, and Adult Depends. Larger sizes of diapers and pull ups are appreciated.

*Total donated through September \$1,340.43**

*Price determined by a Google search of average costs



WEDNESDAY NIGHT DISCIPLESHIP

Beginning September 4, WND will meet every Wednesday during the school year. The schedule has changed a bit this year as they are adding in a Family Worship time! Classes are held for PK-12th Grade- please encourage your children and grandchildren to participate.

5:30 p.m. - PK-6th grade classes meet in classrooms

6:10 p.m. - Family Worship

6:30 p.m. - Family Supper in Fellowship Hall

(Parent/Guardian required for students in 5th grade and under)

7-8 p.m. 7-12 grade Youth Group

SUMC is looking for volunteers to help prepare, serve, and clean up for the Family Supper the Third Wednesday of every month. We also need volunteers to provide baked goods (6 dozen). Please contact Rebecca or Paula for more information and to sign up.

Looking for other ways to support this ministry? Visit the following supply wish list links:
[Walmart](#) [Amazon](#)

ADVENT ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Thank you to Steven and Jessica Grace for putting together these fun Advent family activities.

CHRISTMAS

Advent Calendar

Read a Promise

Read Isaiah 9:6-7

Create a Nativity Craft with blocks, play-Doh or coloring pages

Create a Star Craft Use glitter, paper, cardboard

Make a Paper Chain Countdown-write a blessing/thankful for on each link

Read Angel & Mary story

Read Luke 1:26-38

Make a birthday card for Jesus!

Bake and decorate cookies with your loved ones.

Watch your favorite Christmas movie.

Pick 3 toys in good condition to donate to someone in need

Attend a Christmas concert.

Learn a new bible verse

Ex: Matthew 1:21, John 3:16

Look for Christmas lights in town

John 8:12

Read a classic Christmas story with your family.

Decorate your home with festive lights.

Make homemade hot chocolate

Pick 5 items to donate to the food pantry

Wrap presents and make it extra special.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Make a Stable Fort Use pillows, blankets & talk about Jesus' birth

Play a Christmas game with your family.

Sing Christmas carols.

Write a Thank you note to someone in the Community

Read the Journey to Bethlehem

Read Luke 2:1-20

Light a candle and Sing Silent Night

CHRISTMAS

Advent Word Search

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

ADVENT
ANGEL
BABY
BIRTH
BLESSING
BETHLEHEM

FRANKINCENSE
GIFTS
GOLD
HOLY SPIRIT
HOPE
JESUS

JOSEPH
JOY
LORD
LOVE
MANGER
MARY

MIRACLE
MYRRH
REJOICE
STABLE
STAR

CHRISTMAS

Advent Word Scramble

1. LAEDNC _____
2. APECE _____
3. HRWETA _____
4. VTYITNIA _____
5. JYO _____
6. EPSHOJ _____
7. IGLTH _____
8. EVOL _____
9. NLAESG _____
10. HPOE _____
11. NMEELMAU _____
12. YRAM _____
13. SSUJE _____
14. LPPERU _____
15. TVNEDA _____
16. LTNSIE GHNIT _____
17. ACORLS _____



IOWA CITY AREA CIRCUIT PRESENTS:

Songs of the Journey

An Epiphany Celebration



January 4, 2025
3:00 PM
Coralville United
Methodist Church

Hymn Sing and Fellowship

Every journey is made lighter when
love walks beside us.

During our Songs of the Journey
celebration, we'll join in supporting
Open Heartland, an organization that
journeys with immigrant families
through care, community, and
connection.





For More Visit:

[Iowa Conference](#)
[Southeast District](#)
[United Women in Faith](#)

MINISTRY REPORTS

Springdale UMC Leadership Board meeting—November 24, 2025

Full Leadership Board: 6 p.m.

Attendance: Julie Mather, Jo Leighty, Paula Rogers, Steven Grace, Jessica Grace, Rev.
Rebecca Carver

1. Opening Devotion and Prayer
2. October 28, 2025 Minutes
 - a. Jo moved to approve. Steven seconded. Motion carried.
3. Trustees
 - a. Farm Ground
 - i. Review documents and send to Jim & Rob respectively
 1. Steven will review and Paula and/or Jessica will look for a legal - thoughts were it was closer to 10 acres rather than the 8 acres that the assessor states.
 - b. Gutters-still need to silicone
 - c. Time Capsule
 - i. Adding stuff this week (wait if surveys are not back yet?)
 1. We are going to wait another week or so to add items to the capsule. Steven will move the capsule out of the sanctuary.
 - ii. Leadership needs to review the updated directory and add additional information to be included in the time capsule.
 - d. Photos
 - i. Paula is continuing to organize the photos/history documents. Discussion was had as to what we want these for: electronic versions, photo books, scrap books, photo boxes, etc. It was suggested that we organize photo boxes by event at this point. It was also suggested to contact the circuit to see what other churches are doing. Paula will follow up on that.
 - ii. Duplicates of photos as well as directories will be at the church for anyone to take if they are interested. This process is ongoing.
 - e. Accessibility
 - i. Elevator/Lift - more information to come
 - f. Deep Cleaning List
 - i. It's ready and sitting on the front pew for circulation
4. SPRC
 - a. Upcoming Dates
 - i. December 28 - Steven will prepare worship
 - ii. April 19 -
 - b. Nominations (Lay Leadership Development)
 - i. See below in Stewardship regarding "money counting"
 - c. Charge Conference
 - i. Keep goals at forefront for the year (here and with entire congregation)
 1. Include in newsletter
 - ii. Mission/Vision/Values - Future Focused Small Group
 1. Where are we going, how do we want to get there?
 - d. Renewal Leave
 - i. Discussion was had regarding Rev. Rebecca and the amount of hours she puts in as a ¼ time pastor. We want her to know that we would fully support her if she ever feels that she needs to take a stretch of time to rest and rejuvenate. Rev. Rebecca seemed appreciative of the discussion and said that she would put that on her things to think about for the upcoming year.
5. Stewardship
 - a. Treasurer's Report—through October, 2025
 - i. Insurance - Steven is unsure if Fulwider is still going to be the agent on file as of January 2026.
 - b. Money Counting
 - i. Lynda & Julie to double check cash

- ii. What to do with money if Jess or Jess is not there
 - 1. Discussion was had.
 - c. CDs
 - i. Renewed at 3.8% (rates changed day of our meeting)
 - d. Stewardship Campaign
 - i. Two weeks now, more in January (discipleship)
 - ii. Pledge cards
 - 1. Jessica prepared cards to be handed out/mailed the week after Christmas
 - 2. She will add a date of January 18/25 to be returned
 - e. Spending limits
 - i. Debit
 - ii. Other reimbursements
 - 6. COME
 - a. Cedar Co. Winter Expo
 - i. Bake Sale Sunday - December 14 Noon- 4 p.m.
 - ii. Tree Decorating - Wednesday/Thursday 4-8 p.m.
 - b. Food Pantry updates/ideas
 - i. December - Soups
 - ii. January, February 2026
 - 1. January - Soaps (laundry, dish, and body)
 - 2. February - Diapers/Pull Ups and Depends
 - 7. Other
 - a. Wednesday Night Discipleship
 - i. Going well, thank you to everyone who is helping out!
 - b. January Circuit Wide Epiphany Event
 - i. January 4, Coralville UMC
 - 1. Good Christian Friends Rejoice - 224
 - 2. Sing We Now of Christmas - 237
 - ii. Paula will prepare a slideshow for the 150th Anniversary Year-Long Celebration
 - c. Active Shooter Training
 - i. Kevin Bailey, retired officer from Iowa City who is now working in West Branch.
 - ii. Open to coming to any church and doing a walkthrough to get familiar with the church as well as provide suggestions as to what to do in this situation
 - 8. Next Meeting:
 - a. January 26, 6 p.m.
 - 9. Closing Prayer
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