

ELY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"The Little Church With the Big Heart"

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Parish News

December 22, 2023

A Note from Pastor Craig

All four Advent Candles will be lit when we gather for Christmas Eve worship at 5:30 on December 24th. Once again we'll welcome the birth of the Christ Child, as have Jesus' followers around the world for centuries. "Joy to the World the Lord is Come!"

The term "Incarnation" is given to this miraculous event, where God's own self has come to dwell with us as a human being. The human being Jesus is also God's anointed, the Christ, who has come reveal God in all God's fullness and to take upon himself all the sin, evil, and brokenness of the world. The bringing back of broken individuals and humanity to God happens through him.

The entire structure of the Old Testament has anticipated this sort of revelation from God, has pictured God coming to redeem Israel from all its enemies. We understand who Jesus was and who Jesus is in light of Old Testament prophecies. Our Jewish brothers and sisters, from whom we have received these Scriptures, have a different understanding, which we honor. For us, however, we see Jesus Christ as God's defining revelation "in the fullness of time."

In other words, we rejoice with Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, wise men, and others who found their way to the manger to worship and have followed Jesus ever since. For followers of Jesus, he is Emmanuel, God with Us. He is the Light of the World, the light which shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. The images for Jesus Christ are endless - The Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the True Vine, the Lamb of God, the Lion of Judah, and so on.

The most profound art across the centuries has inspired us humans as composers, painters, sculptors, and authors have used their immense gifts in seeking to evoke the wonder of these glad tidings within us - Handel's *Messiah*, Michelangelo's paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Christina Rossetti, who wrote *"In the Bleak Winter"* and *"Love Came Down at Christmas."*

All this, whether Scripture, Christmas Carols, or art, brings this miracle to you and me and it is at this point where you and I make it our own by opening our heart and life to the Good News of the Christ Child. Or as Phillips Brooks wrote in the moving hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

My very best wishes are with you and yours for a Joyous Christmas. Pastor Craig

Worship Services on December 24th and December 31st

Christmas Eve: Our Christmas Eve Service will be at 5:30 on December 24th. It will be the traditional service of Christmas Carols and Scripture Readings. The choir will sing an introit and an anthem, Suzanne Makes will play a flute solo, and I will preach a brief sermon.

The candle lighting will be near the end of the service. The light of the Christ Child will be passed through the sanctuary from person to person, as we light our individual candles. We'll sing "Silent Night" in the darkened sanctuary while seated. When we're finished singing we'll have a brief time of silence to fully absorb the moment, then we'll turn the lights back on and stand to sing "Joy to the World."

We will not pass an offering plate, but there will be an offering plate in the church narthex at the rear of the church where people may leave an offering.

Individuals/Families who purchased poinsettias in memory of a loved one may take them home following the Christmas Eve Service.

Christmas Eve Day: We'll hold our usual Sunday morning 10:00 a.m. worship service. The Sunday December 24th service will feature Christmas Carols. The first reading will be the account of the angel Gabriel coming to visit Mary announcing that she will bear a son, who will be called "The Son of the Most High." Following the angel's departure, Mary immediately travels to see Elizabeth, who has also conceived following an angel's visit to her husband. The second reading will be Mary's song of praise when the two women meet and share their mutual joy. There will be Sunday School this morning.

New Year's Eve Day (December 31): We'll once again gather New Year's Eve Day for worship at 10:00. The morning service will be a "Watch Night" service of sorts, when we'll look forward to 2024 and consider our preparation to receive what God, the one who "makes all things new," will bring to us. Once again we will have Sunday School.

Rule of Christ Training - Save the Date

John Nowell from the Minnesota Annual Conference will be at our church on Sunday, January 28, 2024 for a Rule of Christ training. The Rule of Christ teaches congregations good communication. This is beneficial at any time and especially when there is an upcoming pastoral transition. We had this same training in 2018 before Pastor Dana Thompson retired and I moved to Ely.

John will worship with us at 10:00, following which will be a light lunch. John will lead training for the entire congregation from 11:30 - 1:00. The training from 1:30 - 3:00 is geared for the Pastor Parish Relations Committee and Ad Council, although anyone from the congregation is also invited to attend.

Would you mark this date and times on your calendars? We'd love to have as many people as possible attend from our congregation. John has led these trainings for many years and brings a winsome and positive manner as he helps our communication as a congregation.

The Ely United Methodist Church

Prayer Wall

December 22, 2023

This is a guide for prayer this week. The *Prayer Wall* is a reminder of those needing prayers during devotional times. Thank you for dedicating some of your personal prayer time to lift up these requests.

Isaiah 40: 28 (NIV)

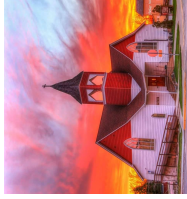


“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God... He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

We lift up the following in prayer...

- **Jo Philipp** – Linda Hane’s sister, Jo, is facing surgery to correct a bowel obstruction cause by scar tissue from a previous surgery. Pray for successful surgery and quick recovery.
- **Eleanor** – Eleanor, a 6 year old, is diagnosed with a brain tumor on her pituitary. Surgery relieved pressure and provided a biopsy. Pray the biopsy is not cancer or spreading. Pray also for Eleanor’s mother & father and siblings, Jolene, Scott, Finley & Rhett. Eleanor’s family is friends with the Devon Luthens family.
- **Rachael** – **Update: Our prayers for our friends’ daughter, Rachael, have been answered as she has made a remarkable recovery after severe depression. Her parents said it was a total miracle and they “have their daughter back!”** Rachel, daughter of a dear friend of Heather & Marshall Monthei’s, is in psychiatric care for serious depression and her new treatments are not working.
- **Wes Weisinger family & friends** – Wes passed away. Pray for comfort and peace for his family and friends, especially his mother Barb and his aunt Vicki Wagner.
- **Linda Keck** – Margie Olson asked for prayers for her friend, Linda Keck, who suffered a stroke.
- **Mary Ellen Skeesick** – Linda Hane asked for prayers for her sister, Mary Ellen, who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer.
- **Steff Hyink** – Lucy Diesslin asked for prayers for her friend, Steff Hyink, in the loss of her sister, Barb.
- **Jeff** – Sheri Rue asked for prayers for her brother, Jeff, who is now going through a divorce.
- **Emma** – Trish Sheffler asked for prayer of healing for Emma who just had back surgery.
- **Dave** – Lisa Porthan asked for prayers for her father, Dave, whose Parkinson’s is advancing and her mother who is handling Dave’s care.
- **Loren** – Lucy Diesslin’s brother, Loren, has been placed on hospice comfort care. Pray for his comfort.
- **Shane** – Pray for successful treatments for Zach & Jacob Rue’s friend who has begun chemo for his cancer.
- **Rod Loe’s family and friends** – Rod passed away on the morning of Tuesday, December 5. Services will be held at Ely UMC on December 15 at 11:00 AM.
- **Jim Gift** – **Update: His surgery went well and he is back home.** Lucy Diesslin asked for prayers for their nephew, Jim Gift, who has been diagnosed with sarcoma carcinoma on the roof of his mouth.
- **Lindsay and Crystal’s friend Greg** – Crystal Nickerson asked for prayers for her niece, Lindsay, who has been diagnosed with breast cancer & for her friend, Greg, who had heart surgery and now has complications.
- **Nathan Jann** – Erin Moravitz asked for prayers for her cousin, Nathan, who broken his tibia in 5 or 6 places and his fibula in 2 places while ice skating. He will require several surgeries and long-term physical therapy to recover fully from this very serious break.
- **The Russia / Ukraine conflict • Political Unrest in Africa • The People of Israel & Those Involved in the Current Conflict** – Pray for a world-wide lasting resolution, safety of the people, and peace.

We include all the United Methodist Churches and Pastors, both active and retired, in our MN UMC Annual Conference as we work in extraordinary ways to keep our congregations and communities free from infection by the COVID-19 virus.



December 2023

Sunday **Monday** **Tuesday** **Wednesday** **Thursday** **Friday** **Saturday**

<p>31 10:00 AM Worship Service and Sunday School New Year's Eve</p>					1	2
<p>3 9:30 AM Choir Practice 10:00 AM Worship Service and Sunday School <i>Holy Communion</i></p>	4	5	6 12:00 NOON UMW Christmas Luncheon at the Ely Grand Lodge	7 6:00 PM Choir Practice	8	9
<p>10 9:30 AM Choir Practice 10:00 AM Worship Service and Sunday School</p>	11	12	13 10:00 AM Ely Ministerial Association	14 5:00 PM • Visioning Committee Meeting 6:00 PM Choir Practice	15	16
<p>17 10:00 AM Worship Service and Sunday School</p>	18	19	20	21 6:00 PM Choir Practice 7:00 PM - All Church Conference Followed by Ad Council Meeting	22	23
<p>24 10:00 AM Worship Service and Sunday School 4:45 Choir Practice 5:30 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service</p>	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28 6:00 PM Choir Practice	29	30

December 11 - December 13 • Pastor Craig at St. John's Abby