



# ALGOMA BOULEVARD UNITED • METHODIST • CHURCH

[abumc.org](http://abumc.org) ..... December 2023

**MISSION STATEMENT:** *As the Algoma Boulevard United Methodist Church family of faith, we will help people experience God through...transformational worship, lifelong learning, inspiring music, life-changing service, and passionate witness.*

MATT RAWLE

THE HEART THAT GREW THREE SIZES

MATT RAWLE

FINDING FAITH IN THE STORY OF THE GRINCH

THE GIFT OF THE Nutcracker



# *From the Heart of Pastor Ellen*

For unto us, a child is born ~Isaiah 9.6

Dear Beloved, ~

It's our first Christmas together,  
and I am so excited! ❤️

One of the greatest gifts that we have to offer is the gift of hope. We know that sorrow and joy dance with each other this season, so let's offer hope to all we see. Share with them about *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes*

Isaiah 9.2-7 is a common scripture lesson for Christmas Eve. It begins, "*The people walking in great darkness...*" It can feel like we are walking in great darkness as there is so much doom and gloom around us, but we are people of hope and we know the ongoing story.

*For a child has been born for us, a son given to us... he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... there shall be endless peace...He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward...*

Love is the story. It's unconditional, unlimited, undeserved LOVE! And it is ours! Jesus came and was anointed "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and to recover of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners."

## **This is GOOD NEWS!**

To help everyone share the Good News, the Church Council has gifted us with Advent devotionals, including information about the December worship experiences. Take one for yourself and one (or more) to share.

During the darkness, let us be people of the light—the hope of Jesus Christ and let's pack the house and the Good News!

*Love and Peace,  
Pastor Ellen*

**Bishop Jung's**

**Soul Food**

**November 7, 2023**



*"Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*  
*Ephesians 4:3.*

Our world is facing much division, with issues of wars, responses to major natural disasters, polarization of political stances, and an inability to negotiate a middle ground. As Christians, we must focus on the essence of the Gospel so we can live in the way of Christ. We must obey the prayer of Jesus, Who prayed that His followers might become one – as He and the Father were one.

Suppose the Gospel were divided into “left” and “right” ideologies based on the mantras of our culture. With that, the Church would fail with the first step in following Jesus! Rather, let’s turn our focus to Jesus, Who called us to do difficult things, like truly honoring differences, living united, and even loving our enemies. Only Jesus can be the savior of the world, so let’s obey His often difficult but important teachings that lead to an abundant life.

Theological prejudice fractures the light that confronts the darkness. The power to fight darkness is not separation but Christian unity and perseverance in love. Since we are members of the body of Christ, we must work hard and strive to love and understand one another no matter what. Suppose the church continues to divide, follows the cultural ways, and focuses on a narrow-minded ideology that favors only one side. In that case, it will fracture the light of holiness and leave us with nothing distinct from culture.

Let’s take on the way of Jesus! Let’s pray to understand each other, seek ways to strengthen relationships - even through tears, and stay together - even though it may be difficult. I believe that the Holy Spirit is like lubricating oil that grinds away the rough parts and makes us into beautiful and generous people. We are being made perfect in God’s love and grace.

I believe the secret to living as siblings in Christ is to become people of prayer and perseverance in faith. I pray that our most significant work will be to love the Gospel and to bear witness to it so that our efforts will not be only in defense of the institutional church but the fruit of obedience to Christ Jesus.

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

# WHAT'S UP IN WORSHIP

The Christmas season is here! Help spread the word about the exciting events happening in December at ABUMC. The Church Council has purchased 500 Advent Devotional books to be shared among the congregation and with our neighbors. It includes a label with all the worship opportunities for December and is an easy tool to use to invite people to come to worship. Pick up a copy for yourself and at least one for your neighbor, co-worker, family member—whomever you'd like to invite to our December festivities. We've got something for everyone—**The Heart That Grew Three Sizes at 9 am; Themes from The Nutcracker at 10:30 am;** and **A Winter's Grace choir cantata on December 17.** (*Rumor has it the high school madrigal singers will be here between services on December 10.*)



**December Worship Experiences**  
Open to the Public  
**All Are WELCOME!**

Family fun with the  
**Heart That Grew Three Sizes**  
Sundays @ 9 am 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 & 12/24

Explore a favorite Christmas story -  
**The Nutcracker**  
Sundays @ 10:30 am 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 & 12/24

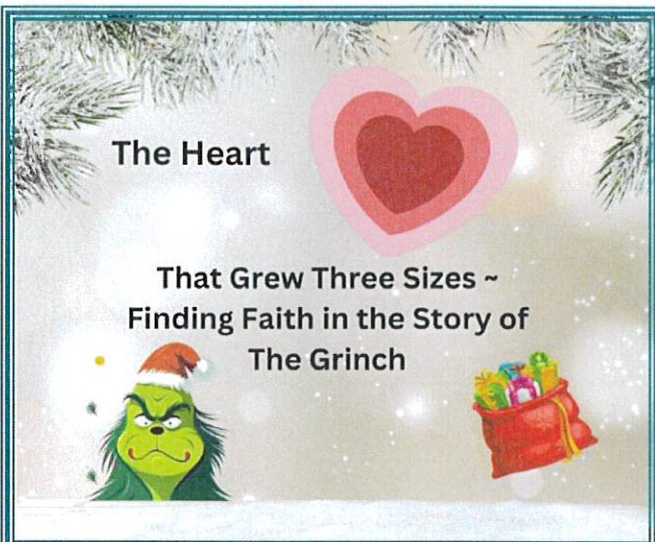
**Christmas Eve**

5:30 pm  
Family Service

8:00 pm  
Traditional

**Winter's Grace**  
**A Cantata For Christmas**  
by Joseph M. Martin  
December 17 at 9 & 10:30 am

Begin the year with a fresh start...  
**Wesleyan Renewal Service**  
**10:00 12/31/2023**  
**ONE SERVICE ONLY**



**Sundays @ 9 am**

**Advent Wreath Lighting All Services**

**December 3**

**Communion**

**When Everything Went Wrong**

Isaiah 61.1-2; Amos 5.21, 23-24

*"It's the Most Wonderful  
Time of the Year?"*

**December 10**

**When Christmas Isn't Christmas**

Isaiah 50.3-6; Zechariah 7.9-10; and

Matthew 3.7-12

*"Looking the Part"*

**December 17**

**When Light Shines**

A reflection on Matthew 2.11

and

**CHOIR CHRISTMAS CANTATA**

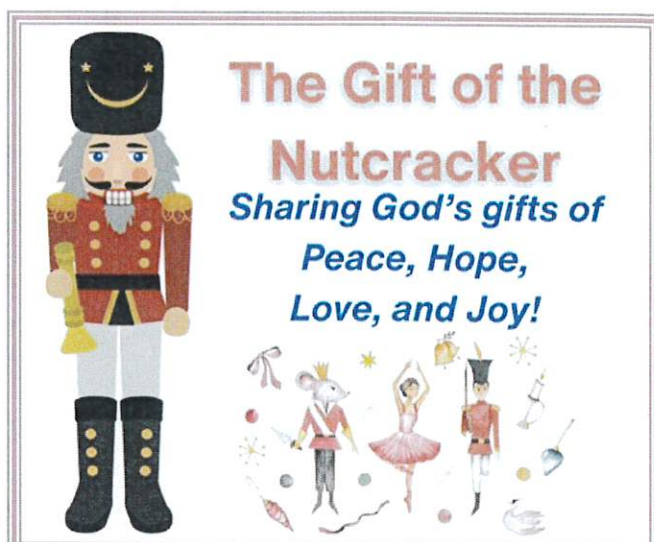
**"Winter's Grace"**

**December 24**

**When Joy Is Our Song**

Luke 2.8-20

*"The Heart That Grew Three Sizes"*



**Sundays @ 10:30 am**

**Advent Wreath Lighting All Services**

**December 3**

**Communion**

**Clara: Waiting for Christmas**

Jeremiah 33.14-16

Luke 1.30-33

*"Setting the Stage"*

**December 10**

**Drosselmeir: A Godfather's Love**

Genesis 1.1-4

Luke 1:34-38

*"God the Father's Love"*

**December 17**

**When Light Shines**

A reflection on Luke 3.1-6

and

**CHOIR CHRISTMAS CANTATA**

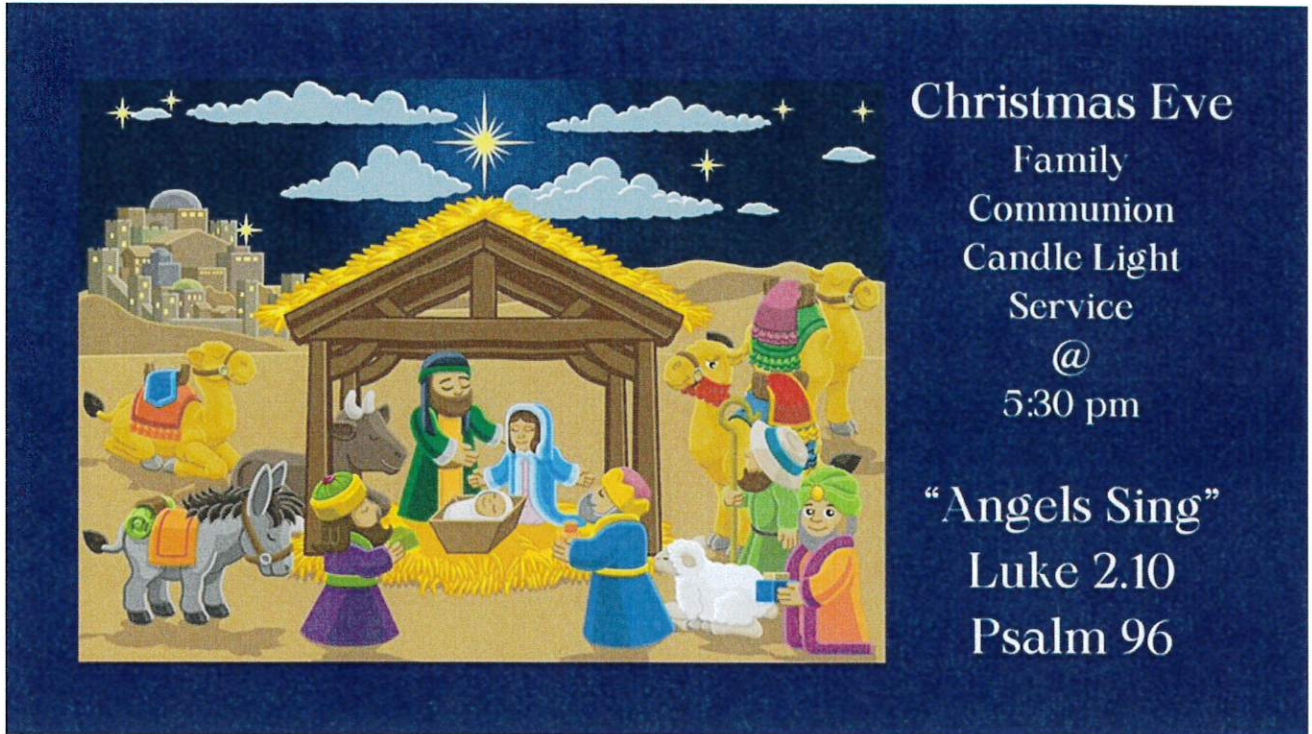
**"Winter's Grace"**

**December 24**

**The Nutcracker: The Greatest Gift**

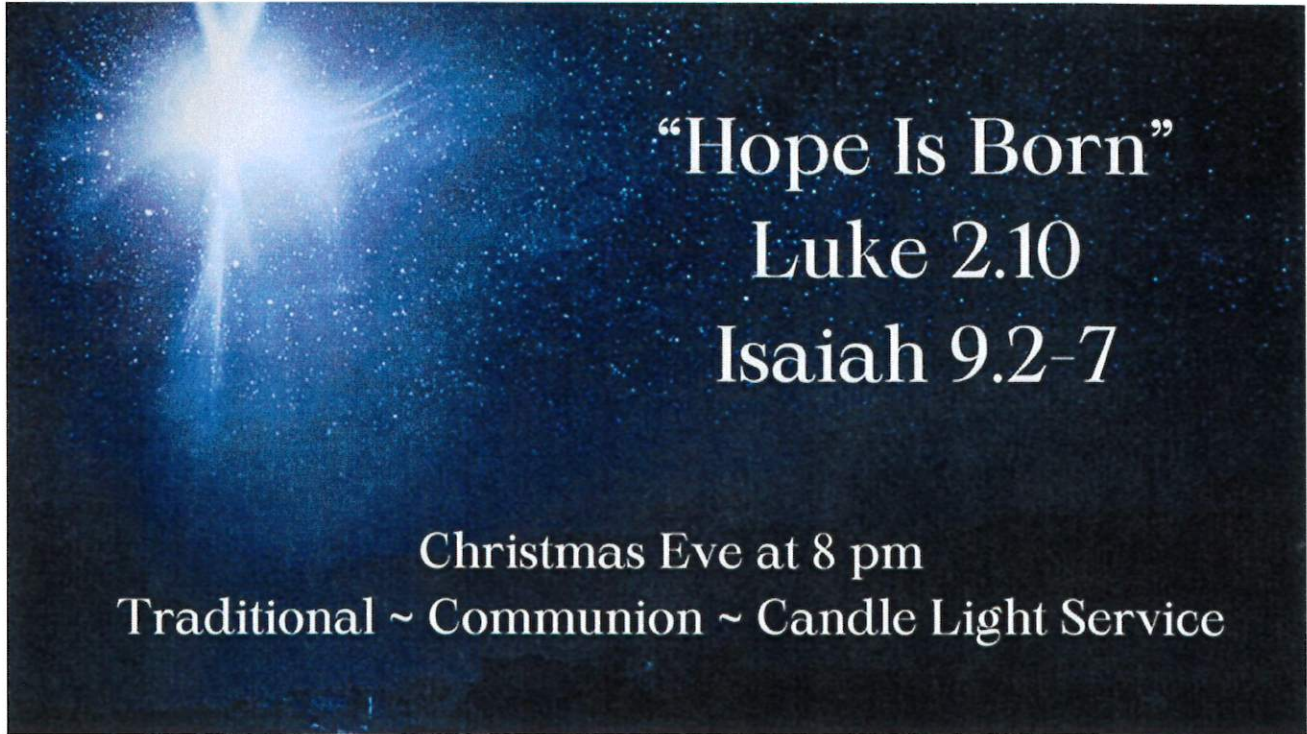
Luke 1.31-35

*"Joyful All Ye Nations Rise"*



Christmas Eve  
 Family  
 Communion  
 Candle Light  
 Service  
 @  
 5:30 pm  
  
 “Angels Sing”  
 Luke 2.10  
 Psalm 96

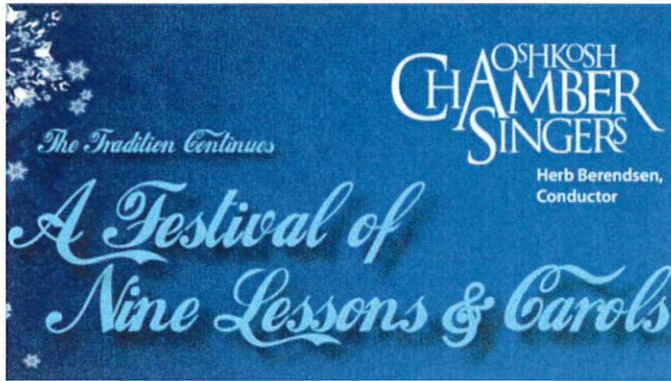
We will offer two spirit-filled worship experiences for the whole family on Christmas Eve. Both services will include communion, candle lighting, and some of your favorite Christmas carols. The 5:30 pm service will include some elements from the “Heart That Grew Three Sizes” series. **For the 8 pm service, please plan on arriving by 7:45 pm to hear a youth ensemble prelude featuring music from “The Nutcracker.”** Thank you, Caden, for organizing and leading *this group*. We will gather in Paine Hall prior to the service for this gift of music.



“Hope Is Born”  
 Luke 2.10  
 Isaiah 9.2-7

Christmas Eve at 8 pm  
 Traditional ~ Communion ~ Candle Light Service

**Oshkosh Chamber Singers  
Presents**



**Saturday, December 16**

**Performances at 2 pm and 5 pm**

**Trinity Episcopal Church**

**203 Algoma Blvd, Oshkosh**

***An Oshkosh tradition for more  
than 30 years!***

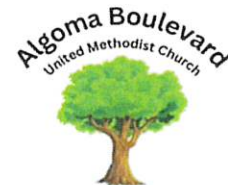
ABUMC members include Todd Kaphaem, Nancy Kaphaem, Deb Madel, Jaye Alderson, and Dorothy Zerbe.

Directed by Herb Berendsen and accompanied by Jared Stellmacher on organ, a brass ensemble led by Marty Robinson, and harpist Tammy Kazmierczak, the audience will join the choir in song. Members of the community will read scripture passages celebrating the Advent and Christmas stories.

Selections will include traditional carols; works by John Rutter, Dan Forrest, and Sir David Willcocks;

“Christmas Cantata,” by Daniel Pinkham; “There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob,” by Felix Mendelssohn; “Gabriel’s Message,” by Stephen Paulus; and “The Lamb,” by John Tavener.

Tickets for the concert are \$20 in advance for adults and \$25 at the door; and \$5 for students. They are available from singers, at Heid Music, 1750 W. South Park Avenue; Gardina’s, 448 N. Main St.; by calling 920-312-8290; or at the door. More information is available at [oshkoshchambersingers.org](http://oshkoshchambersingers.org).



**Annual Church Conference  
Sunday, December 17, 2023, 5:30 pm**

**President: Rev. Park Hunter  
North East District Superintendent**

SPRC meets at 5 pm

**ALL MEMBERS INVITED!**



## GROWING OUR FAITH

### Wesleyan Covenant Renewal Service

Sunday, December 31, 2023, 10 am



This New Year's Eve Day, we will celebrate one of my favorite worship experiences ~ A Celebration of the Covenant Renewal Service in the Wesleyan Tradition. One of the things that I treasure about this service is the freedom, liberation, and re-commitment it offers for my discipleship journey. I get to practice the art of forgiving myself, letting go, and beginning again.

In the UM Book of Worship, we discover that John Wesley found the service rich and meaningful. There are several journal entries that express his deep appreciation for these worship experiences.

*"Many mourned before od, and many were comforted" ~ (April 1756)*

*"It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing" ~ (October 1765)*

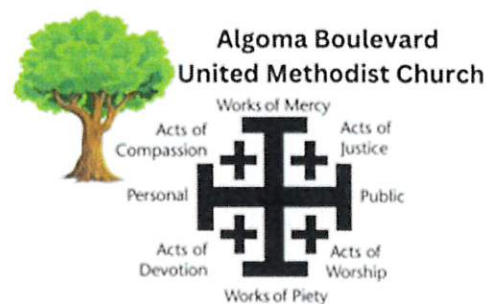
*"It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences...I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing.*


*Afterward, many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backsliding."*

*~ (January 1, 1775)*

The heart of this service, focused in the Covenant prayer, requires people to commit themselves to God. This covenant is serious and assumes adequate preparation for and continual response to the covenant.

- Let us pray for each as journey toward this commitment.
- Let us examine our discipleship practices ~ what is working to bring us closer to God, and what needs to be changed.
- Let us be open to the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us.



We witness to Jesus Christ in the world and follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. 

**CAN'T BE IN PERSON**

**Worship on Facebook**

**10:00 am**





# Reclaim. Revive. Renew.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Reclaim.

Bishop Bickerton opens the video by describing a time when he felt unaccepted by peers. Then, at church camp, he found people who valued him, encouraged him and offered him a sense of hope. Surrounded by these people, he had a conversion experience.

- Reflect on your own conversion. Who are the important people in your conversion story?
- How will you reclaim the importance of that moment for you?

Read [John 4:39-42](#)

- In her testimony after her time with Jesus, the woman at the well tells others, "He told me everything I've ever done." Why is that an important part of her story?

### Revive.

Sometimes in life, faith and community, we can lose sight of the things that matter most.

- As you reflect on the attributes of beloved community and the advice on unity from the 1850 Book of Discipline (both listed to the right), what similarities do you see?

Read [Mark 12:28-31](#)

When asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus gives two: Love God. Love people.

- How is the love of God closely connected to the love of others? Why do you think Jesus so closely connects these two loves?
- How might a renewed commitment to love one another (John 13:34-35) encourage unity?

### Renew.

For change to take place, our commitment must be renewed.

- Where are you seeing renewal in the church today? What is your congregation doing that you want to share, to "pass it on?"
- As you reflect on the Bishop's message, where do you feel called to renew?

Read [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Jesus expects his followers to live differently from those around us: to be agents of change by living into God's future now.

- What does it mean to be salt & light in your community? In your family? In your congregation?

### ATTRIBUTES OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

1. A shared desire to be peaceful, happy and safe.
2. Recognition that while conflict still exists, it is resolved peacefully, nonviolently and without hostility, ill will or resentment.
3. Recognition of the inherent worth and value of all people, animals and ecosystems.
4. Unconditional and all-inclusive kindness, compassion and love for all life.
5. Means used to create change are just as kind and compassionate as the ends we seek.

### 1850 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE ADVICE TO MAINTAIN UNION

#### QUESTION:

What can be done in order to achieve a closer union with each other?

1. Let us be deeply convinced of the absolute necessity of it.
2. Pray earnestly for and speak freely to each other.
3. When we meet, let us never depart without prayer.
4. Take great care not to despise each other's gifts.
5. Never speak lightly of each other.
6. Let us defend each other's character in everything so far as is consistent with the truth.
7. Labor in honor each to prefer the other before himself.
8. We recommend a serious perusal of the book, "The Causes, Evils, and Cures of Heart and Church Division" [written by Francis Asbury].

[UMC.org/renew](http://UMC.org/renew)  
#BeUMC

## **GROWING OUR FAITH**

### **NEW MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES!**



### **An Invitation to Prayer**

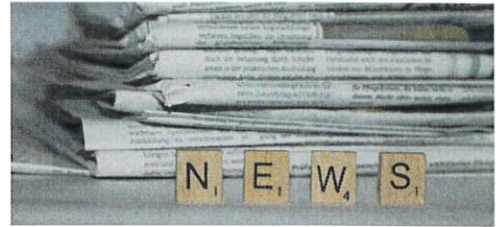
Are you called to prayer? Would you like to be part of a prayer ministry? If so, we have a new ministry for you!

The goal is to provide a weekly email inviting folks to pray for others near and far. It will use a format similar to “Prayers for the People” from our hymnal and include intercessory prayers from *The Disciples Journal*.

To sign up, please respond to one of the “Prayers to Share” emails sent by Pastor Ellen or send a note to her at [pastor@abumc.org](mailto:pastor@abumc.org). We will build the email prayer team during December, and at the beginning of 2024, we will switch to a list of those who choose to participate in this ministry. Thank you for your patience as we engage in this new prayer ministry. Please send your prayer requests to Pastor Ellen.

*We are called to witness Jesus Christ in the world and to follow his teachings...*

### **An Invitation to Readers**



Have you tried out the comfy furniture in Paine Hall or the Open Door Library? Would you like to spend time by yourself or with friends reading the daily [Oshkosh Northwestern](#) newspaper at church? If so, we have a new ministry for you!

Pastor Ellen subscribes to the local newspaper and has the paper delivered to the church. She’s looking for folks willing to read the newspaper to search for articles in which the church is mentioned so that they can be clipped, to share with her about important issues in the community, and to be inspired by needs that can lead to greater community connection and perhaps new ministries. The newspaper is currently available in the church office. Just come in, ask for it, and make yourself comfy!

**Sunday Discussion Group**  
**Finish up "First Light" on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.**  
**Starting in January**  
**"A Force More Powerful"**

*We will not be meeting any of the December Sundays when that interferes with any special church services.*

This six-week study explores six successful nonviolent movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Mohandas Gandhi's leadership of the Indian Independence movement, the Civil Right Movement, the boycotts of the Eastern Cape Province as part of the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, the Danish resistance in the Nazi Occupation, the Polish Solidarity Movement, and the Chilean democracy movement to oust Augusto Pinochet. Some of us remember some of the news reports of these activities, but we probably never fully understood how important nonviolence was in reaching the final conclusion in each of the situations.

The study will include the possibility of reading the complete book about the activities or reading summaries of the materials, and a DVD based on a PBS program on the subject.

The study will include the possibility of reading the complete book about the activities or reading summaries of the materials, and a DVD based on a PBS program on the subject.

Group size is limited to 12 participants. Contact Don Nelson if interested.

**Winter Camp at Lake Lucerne**  
**January 5 - 7, 2024**



Looking for winter outdoor fun, indoor fireplace, games, singing, and getting to know new people? Then Winter Camp at Lake Lucerne is the place for you! Camp Lucerne is a United Methodist camp located on Lake Lucerne near Wautoma.

Since 1983, people ages 2-80 have gathered each winter to enjoy sledding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, hiking, ice fishing, Frisbee golf, games, puzzles, crafts, good food, and sitting by the fire, enjoying the camaraderie of old friends and new.

Each cabin is heated and equipped with bathrooms, showers, and a fireplace. There are two single beds per room. There are also fireplaces in Ridgewood Lodge, where we meet for many of our activities, and in the Milton Geise Building, where our five meals are served family-style. Registration forms are available.

**YOU ARE INVITED TO SHARE IN THE FUN!**

Any questions? Call Barb Diener-Blumer at 920-379-8450 or Craig Blumer 920-420-1683.



United  
Women  
in Faith

## UWF: Love In Action

### COOKIE WALK DECEMBER 9TH

*The annual Cookie Walk sponsored by United Women in Faith is almost here!*



On **Saturday, December 9, 2023**, we will again host our annual fundraiser in Paine Hall. This is our way to fund our unit and make donations. We donate to ABUMC's Monday meals, Oshkosh's Teacher's Closet, Day-by-Day Warming Shelter, Boys and Girls Club, Christine Ann Center, and Wisconsin's Northcott Neighborhood House.

Thanks to you for all your help with the Cookie Walk in the past years, and please help this year. **We need you! We will accept donations Friday afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m. and Saturday morning at 8 a.m.** Please make cookies, please buy cookies, and please consider helping with the sale. It takes many people to make this a success.

**Cookie sale hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>.** (We've already asked Pastor Ellen to pray for good weather, but you could help with that, too!)

## The Open Door Library

**The library has been updated!**



Duplicates and usable materials were shared with Read School, Fox Valley Christian School-North, Teacher's Closet, Literacy Council, Salvation Army, Goodwill, and St. Vincent's. The very old and damaged items were recycled.

We have kept Bibles and religious reference books for all ages, books for all phases of Christian living, and books and DVDs for holidays. The children's collection provides wide-ranging topics for learning and for fun. Children, parents, and grandparents should not miss it.

The United Women in Faith (UWF) Reading Program books listed for 2024 will be added soon. This year, the books are timelier, and more books for youths are included. They are not limited to UWF; all are welcome to read these books. They are shelved on the right wall as you enter the library, just beyond the display table.

**Newcomers:** The Open Door Library is located across from the office and near the Harmony Room. Books are arranged by subject; shelf labels are being added. Check-out is done by signing your name and phone number on the card to be left in the lid of the file box. Returns go on the shelf underneath the file. If you need help, call Rachel Benton or Jan Nash or check in the office.

**Two new books of interest:** *Falling Into Light: A Lifetime of Waking Up; A Memoir*, by Gordon Lind. Also: *Rough Sleepers*, by Tracy Kidder. This is the story of Dr. Jim O'Connell, who gave up a prosperous career to help develop a program for homeless people in Boston. Dr. O'Connell walked the streets at night, offering medical care, food, and friendship.

### **United Women in Faith Updates By Sandy Butcher, President**

On Oct.13 and 14<sup>h</sup>, 2023, the Wisconsin Conference of the United Women in Faith held their Annual Celebration at Lake Street United Methodist Church in Eau Claire. It was a wonderful event filled with worship events, music, fellowship, and information!

The weekend began with an opportunity for service followed by fellowship with a delicious meal, a visit to the Chippewa Valley Museum, and then a tour of the sculptures in Eau Claire. The walking sculpture tour provided an opportunity to raise money for the UWF "Move 4 Mission" program started by Wisconsin's own Heidi Cartega. (See the November/December issue of *Response Magazine*, page 22, for more information on this national program.)

We gathered for worship and to learn from some great speakers on Friday and Saturday: "Soul Care" by Sarah Aiken-Felling; "How to Have Difficult Conversations" by Kerri Parker; and keynote speaker, Mike Cohoon, who shared the Hope Village Chippewa Falls program for short-term and longer-term

housing alternatives and services for people experiencing homelessness in Chippewa County.

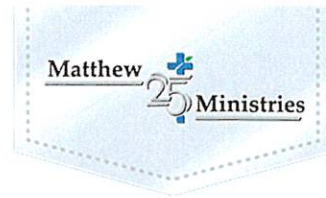
Saturday's breakout sessions offered more opportunities for learning. First was the "Ministries of Chippewa Valley," second was the "Kairos Prison Ministry," third was "Our Whole Lives Faith and Sexuality over the Lifetime," fourth was "Why Gardening is Good for Us," and fifth was "Shaping Destiny."

Trying to put into words the experience of this weekend is difficult. But I will close with the fact that there are so many amazing women throughout the state who put their faith, hope, and love into action. I am proud to represent ABUMC United Women in Faith and the women of our unit as we stand together for women, children, and youths around the world.



**To read Sandy's full report, please follow this link: [UWF Dec 2023 Report](#).**

The ministries of United Women in Faith transform the world. You are invited to support the United Women in Faith by considering a financial donation. You do not need to be a member of our unit. You do not need to be a woman! You can donate with a check made out to ABUMC/UWM and put it in the Sunday offering or directly to Barbara Diener-Blumer. The UWF is an agency of the United Methodist Church, therefore, all donations are tax-deductible. [www.uwfaith.org](http://www.uwfaith.org)




We are continuing our tradition of taking part in the Prison Fellowship Ministries Angel Tree Program. We could make Christmas more special for the children of incarcerated parents. Displayed in the missions area of the church, are slips with the names of several children and items that are on their wish lists. You are invited to take a tag and purchase a gift. These gifts will be given to the kids at Christmas on behalf of their incarcerated parent. Wrapped gifts need to be **returned to the mission bins by December 3rd**. Please remember to place the tag on the gift. Thank you!

## Pill Bottle Collection

A reminder that if you are donating your empty pill bottles, the **labels need to be removed, and the caps need to be on**. We collect these for Matthew 25: Ministries, an international disaster and relief organization. The bottles are used in shipments of medical supplies. Their pill bottle program fulfills the dual needs of improving medical care in developing countries and caring for our environment. Empty prescription and over-the-counter pill bottles may be placed in the designated bin in the missions area in the church hallway.

# ABUMC

ALGOMA BOULEVARD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
building • connecting • growing



## How To Give At ABUMC

We honor our baptismal and membership vows to God by our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. As a contributors to a connectional system, our gifts have a global impact. Thank you for generous support of the ministries at work in and through the people of ABUMC.

**To Give In Person:** There are envelopes available at each worship experience and you can designate how you would like your gift distributed. Cash and checks payable to ABUMC are accepted.

**To Give Electronically:**

**Online at** <https://www.abumc.org/giving>—Select “How To Give” and follow the online giving link.

**Through your bank:** Work with your online banking system to set up recurring on one –time payments through options like ZELLE or electronic funds transfer.

**To Mail Gifts:**

Please make your check payable to ABUMC and send your gift to

ABUMC  
1174 Algoma Boulevard  
Oshkosh, WI 54901

*For assistance with any of these options, please contact our staff at 920.231-2800.  
Thank you for your gifts.*

# Trunk-or-treat fun!

Thanks to all who participated in our Trunk-or-Treat on Oct. 28! We so appreciate all the folks who volunteered their time, decorated their trunks, passed out goodies to the excited little goblins, and to those who donated treats! Our gratitude also to the Oshkosh Fire Department for sending a truck and three awesome firefighters who thrilled the kids.



**DEADLINE FOR CIRCUIT RIDER ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS IS THE 10<sup>TH</sup> OF EACH MONTH. THANK YOU!**