

# NEWSLETTER

## BUILD. SERVE. STAND.



JOIN US FOR WORSHIP  
Sundays at 10am



SHORELINES  
Dec. 2024 - Feb. 2025

# PASTORAL UPDATE



Advent is my favorite church season. For all the obvious reasons—wonderful memories with family, festive decorations, familiar music, endless sources of sugar, and ideally lots and lots of snow. But beyond the customs and traditions, Advent is my favorite season because it's marked with waiting and hoping. I don't always feel like repenting when Lent comes around in the spring. I don't always feel on fire when Pentecost happens in May. Ordinary time (all summer and fall) often feels more frenetic than a consistent rhythm. But every year when Advent arrives, I am filled with yearning for something, whether that's for life to calm down, for the world to be fairer, or for hope to be more tangible.

Since the election, I have not felt overly filled with hope and peace, joy and love. These are my prayers for sure, but they exist surrounded by bubbles of fear and worry. I have heard the stories and seen the tears from those whom our national rhetoric is not just hypothetical but has real implications for their everyday lives. I worry for those who have experienced sexual assault, and the narrative they hear that minimizes their pain. I worry for those who are immigrants, who have loving families and jobs and homes, and the narrative they hear that they are to blame for any of our difficulties and should be banished to another place. I worry for those who are people of color who are more at risk for hate crimes and racial slurs. I worry for those who are GLBTQ, who may not have access to appropriate medical care. I worry for those who are pregnant who do not have a choice over how to care for their own wellbeing. I worry for all of us, as barriers keep emerging to keep us from knowing each other and the growing division that tricks us into thinking we are enemies with our political opponents.

I hold all of these voices and fears in one hand, and in the other I hold onto the promises of the prophets who spoke to their own population of weary, worried people: a light shines in the darkness, God lives among us, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. I have come to realize that Advent is less about a certain feeling I may have, and more about a proclamation: The Prince of Peace is coming.

As people of faith, we have a choice for how we want to engage this new season, this new year. Will we choose the stories of peace and hope? Will we work for joy and love? I know we will. I've seen it week after week, in each of you and how you show up in the world. You are what fills me with hope when the news is too much to bear or the fear creeps in. Keep shining your light and shedding your love in the ordinary, mundane parts of your lives. You are the messengers of Advent for a world in pain.

With gratitude,  
Pastor Brooke

**BROOKE HEERWALD STEINER**  
LEAD PASTOR

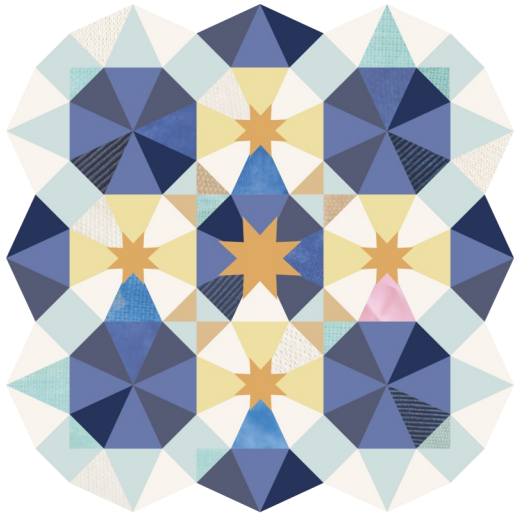
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BUILD. SERVE. STAND.



# ADVENT SERMON SERIES

# UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES



## WORDS FOR THE BEGINNING

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As a calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end. When we ourselves navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown.

December 1	You Are A Blessing
December 8	Hope is Worth the Risk
December 15	Do the Good That is Yours to Do



December 22 Children's Christmas Pageant @10am



December 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship @3pm, 5pm\*, 9pm  
\*Livestreamed



December 31 Hymn Sing  
In-person only @10am



*Excelsior*  
UNITED  
METHODIST  
CHURCH



# BUILD. COMMUNITY



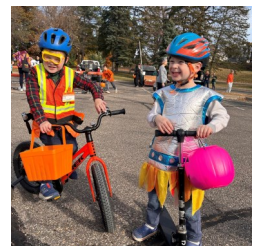
## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

### Sunday School Update

We have had a strong start to our children's ministry this fall. Sunday School attendance has been consistently high, and we are relying on more volunteers to help our mornings run smoothly. Our Sunday School students have spent the fall learning Old Testament stories in fun and interactive ways. We will move onto New Testament stories as we begin rehearsals for the Christmas pageant.

### Children's Christmas Pageant

This year's Christmas pageant will be *A Newscast Christmas*, where kids will share the story of Jesus' birth through reporting on and giving eyewitness accounts of the events that happened in Bethlehem. Rehearsals are during Sunday School and every child or youth who would like to be a part of the program is welcome. Rehearsals begin December 1 and **dress rehearsal is Saturday, December 21 at 10am**. The program will be presented on Sunday, December 22 during the 10am service. Following the pageant, stay for Christmas Fest to enjoy crafts, treats, and fellowship.



### Fun Fall Activities

In addition to Sunday School, our fall children and family events and activities included Fall Kick Off and Blessing of the Backpacks, Degler Farm pumpkin patch and hayride, Trunk or Treat, Children's choir, Many Hands Many Meals packathon, Children's Interactive worship services, and intergenerational crafts.





## YOUTH MINISTRY

### Youth Programming for 6-12<sup>th</sup> Graders

If you are a 6-12<sup>th</sup> grader and want to join Youth Group at EUMC we'd love to have you! We meet the first three Wednesdays of each month from 6-8pm. We start by connecting over dinner, then we gather in the Youth Room downstairs to catch up on things at school and in our lives, we talk about what we're grateful for and hold concerns in prayer. After meaningful conversations of a social justice topic, learning about an outreach program, or our Good Samaritan curriculum, we have great joy with game time.

Youth not participating in Confirmation with Pastor Brooke will continue meeting with Sarah for Youth Group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesdays of each month.

Look at how much fun we're  
having in Youth Group this year!



EYMF Lock In



So-Hi Park



Hanging in the Youth Room



Confirmation students and mentors



Singing "Count On Me"



Many Hands Many Meals

### Ecumenical Youth Ministries Fellowship

We have more exciting EYMF events again this year!

**Monday, January 20:** Day Retreat @ Mount Calvary Lutheran

**Wednesday, March 12:** Prayer Stations @ Excelsior United Methodist

**Wednesday, June 4:** Youth Group Pride Party @ St. David's Episcopal

Please reach out to Pastor Brooke or Sarah with any questions regarding Youth programming!

## Celebrating New Members



**Eileen Finzel** moved into our community from Michigan. She enjoys knitting, reading and jigsaw puzzles. Plus, the many activities at the Waters.

She has two daughters and two granddaughters.

Eileen has been to EUMC many times over the years attending Christmas Eve services with her granddaughters. And now she has come to stay.



**Mary Ellen Fruehan** moved here from Texas to live near her family. She enjoys her cat, and the many friends and social activities at the Waters. She has had careers in both nursing and real estate.

Mary Ellen has two daughters and one grandson.

She also has come to our Christmas Eve service many times over the years with her family.



**Luanne Luebke** moved to Excelsior from Wisconsin to be near family. She enjoys baking, writing, reading, photography and you can often see her out walking to the Commons on Lake Minnetonka.

She has two children and seven grandchildren.

She is quite at home in the Methodist church as her husband was a United Methodist minister for many years.

## New Staff Members



**Jeannie Shubitz, Music Director**, has been a member of EUMC for nearly six years, children's choir director for five years, and is now thrilled to be welcomed as Director of Music. Jeannie has a Master's Degree in Musical Theatre/Opera Performance from Arizona State University, and has performed professionally all over the U.S. She is passionate about music and storytelling as an avenue for connection to one another and our world, and is beyond excited to build on an already thriving musical community here at EUMC. Jeannie and husband, Jason have two sons, Sawyer and Griffin and two cats, Moo and Ripley.



**Alyssa Smith, Nursery Childcare**, is a Minnetonka native who also partially grew up in Romania as a missionary kid. She has been involved in volunteering in ministry and engaging with children ever since, including her current career of early childhood education. Alyssa is excited to be at Excelsior UMC and to know the kids and parents of this community.





## LEADERSHIP

This fall, the focused efforts of the EUMC leadership team were around Stewardship and a new Sunday school strategy to accommodate the growing number of kids. We have celebrated the hiring of a new music director, Jeannie Shubitz, and the efforts from the anti-racism team - culminating in a fantastic Anti - Racism worship service. There was a charge conference held on November 17 and Brooke's 2025 compensation was approved at that time.

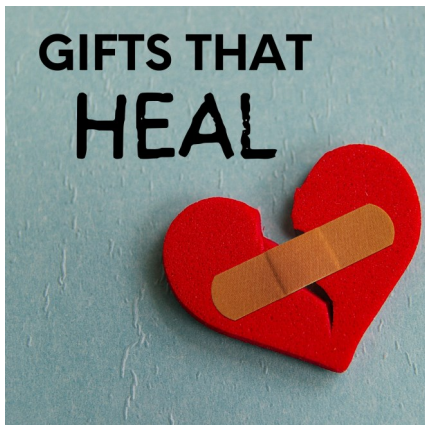
As always, we are here for you.

Your Leadership Team:

Julie Newell (Chair)  
Sarah Nelson (Communications)  
Tyler Cronk (Finance)

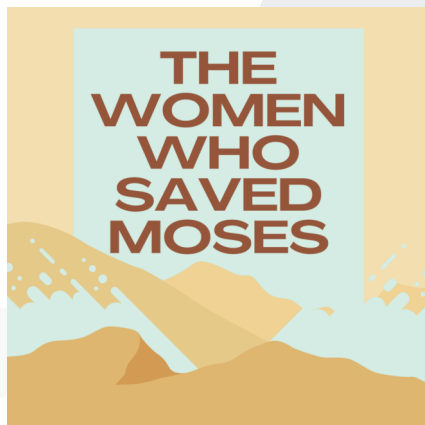
Bill Lester & Phil Pulitzer (SPRC)  
Jennifer Brady Johnson & Beth Firkins (Ministry Teams)  
Jim Stromberg & Jill Jewell (Trustees)

## UPCOMING SERMON SERIES



### January Sermon Series: Gifts that Heal

With the busy “gift-giving season” behind us, let’s take time to reflect on the gifts we can offer others that bring about healing, hope, and beauty in this broken and hurting world. These are not gifts you can buy in a store or order online; these are gifts we must nurture and cultivate within us. Unlike a toy that will break in a few weeks or a gadget whose technology will be obsolete soon enough, these are gifts that last our whole lives. As we offer the gifts of curiosity, creativity and commitment to change, we build a more generous and welcoming world.



### February Sermon Series: The Women Who Saved Moses

The brave ones are not always the names remembered or written down. Nevertheless, they make a big impact. We are familiar with the story of Moses and all he did to shape the people of Israel. Five different women took risks throughout his life to save him. Had it not been for them, Moses may never have been the remarkable leader that we are familiar with today. We will dive deep into the lives of these five women and discover their stories of courage and compassion.

# SERVE. OTHERS



## OUR COMMUNITY

### Environmental Justice Team

In 2025, the Environmental Justice Team's focus will be on local efforts to protect the environment. We are planning an electronics recycling drive and a plastic-free challenge and considering holding a church social justice summit.

We plan to pull together a team for the Hennepin County Plastic-Free Challenge. This fully online event teaches participants ways to reduce the use of plastic, which cuts waste and protects water, wildlife, and our health, as well as that of future generations. It takes place in February, with registration beginning in January. Watch the church bulletin and Thursday email for details and join us for this fun and educational challenge.

The electronics drive involves collecting old computers, laptops, network equipment, cell phones, TVs, and household appliances and sending them for recycling. We are planning the drive for this spring; details and dates to be announced. In the meantime, please don't put any items that might qualify in your trash.

The Environmental Justice Team has been a part of Excelsior Methodist's Social Justice Ministries since 2017. The ministries were the driving force behind the church installing the rooftop solar panels that now produce 100 percent of our building's electricity, and for instituting the organic waste collection that prevents that garbage from generating global-warming methane gas in local landfills.

Our subcommittee believes it is time for the church to hold a social justice summit to discuss the direction of the social justice ministries and their role in the church. We will be talking with the other members of the Social Justice Team and Pastor Brooke to set up this summit. More information to come.





# STAND. FOR JUSTICE

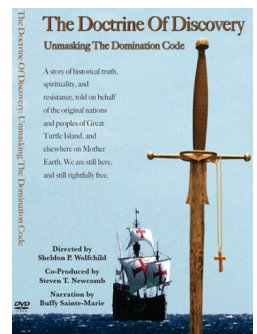
# FIGHT TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Anti-Racism September Movie Night

You can't "discover" land that is already occupied, but growing up, most of us were taught that Columbus discovered American in 1492. The documentary, *The Doctrine of Discovery*, watched by nearly 50 EUMC members and friends during two screenings in October, depicts a more accurate account of the first encounters between Europeans and Indigenous people. It was uncomfortable, unsettling and disturbing to watch.

Most of us were unaware that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans landing anywhere not inhabited by Christians. They believed that they had a Biblical right to the land, the people and the resources they found. The explorers were encouraged and supported by the Catholic church in a series of edicts signed by popes (called papal bulls) that came to be called the Doctrine of Discovery.



To this day, the doctrine serves as a foundation of the political and legal system of the United States. According to John Marshall in an 1823 land dispute before the Supreme Court, the United States, upon winning its independence in 1776, became a successor nation to the right of discovery and acquired the power of dominion from Great Britain. He wrote that upon discovery, Indigenous people had lost their rights to complete sovereignty as independent nations, and only retained a right of "occupancy" in their lands. It was cited in a Supreme Court case as recently as 2005.

In her introduction to the film, Pastor Brooke reminded us that there are times we can't do anything about the history or the heartache we encounter, but we can be present in the pain and loss. She invited us to consider ourselves witnesses to this history, that our task that night was to simply be present and hear the story.

Sometimes we wonder if seeing a movie, attending a play or reading a book makes any difference at all. Watching this movie forced us to view our history in a new way, it fundamentally shifted our worldview. That's how change begins--one person, one group, one partnership at a time. As Pastor Brooke reminded us in her recent sermon series, stories matter. Our presence matters.

### Doctrine of Discovery 1452

"...invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods and to convert them to his and their use and profit."



## CALENDAR

Calendar subject to change. Check website calendar for current schedule.

### Sundays in December

10am- Worship and Sunday school  
11am- Children's Choir rehearsal  
Dec. 1- Communion  
Dec. 22- Christmas Pageant, no SS  
Christmas Fest at 11am

### Mondays in December

7:30am- Men's Bible Breakfast  
9:30am- Bible Study with Pastor Brooke  
Dec. 2, 9, 16  
11am- Brown Bag discussion group

### Tuesdays in December

2pm- Balance & Stretch with Tiffany

### Wednesdays in December 4, 11, 18

6pm- Youth Group  
Confirmation Dec. 11

### Thursdays in December

7pm- Choir rehearsal

### Saturdays in December

8am- Men's Support Group

### Tuesday, December 3

12pm- EUMC Blood Drive

### Thursday, December 5

6:30pm- Anti-Racism Team meeting

### Wednesday, December 11

3 to 5pm- ICA Food Shelf

### Thursday, December 12

1pm- Sarah/Lydia Circle

### Friday, December 13

11am- Member Care Christmas Brunch

### Sunday, December 15

11:15am- Contemplative Practice

### Wednesday, December 18

3pm- ICA Food Shelf (special date)  
5pm- Simpson meal service

### Saturday, December 21

10am- Christmas Pageant rehearsal  
11:30am- Community Lunch

### Monday, December 23

1pm- Cover Girls book group

### Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Worship at 3pm, 5pm, 9pm

### Sundays in January

10am- Worship and Sunday school  
Jan. 5- Communion  
Jan. 12- Children's Interactive worship,  
no Sunday School

### Mondays in January

7:30am- Men's Bible Breakfast  
9:30am- Bible Study with Pastor Brooke  
Jan. 13, 20, 27  
11am- Brown Bag discussion group

### Tuesdays in January

2pm- Balance & Stretch with Tiffany

### Wednesdays in January

6pm- Youth Group Jan. 8 & 15  
Confirmation Jan. 8 & 22

### Thursdays in January

7pm- Choir rehearsal

### Saturdays in January

8am- Men's Support Group

### Tuesday, January 2

6:30pm- Anti-Racism Team meeting

### Wednesday, January 8

3pm- ICA Food Shelf

### Thursday, January 9

1pm- Sarah/Lydia Circle

### Sunday, January 19

11:15am- Contemplative Practice

### Tuesday, January 21

5pm- Simpson meal service

### Wednesday, January 22

3pm- ICA Food Shelf

### Monday, January 27

1pm- Cover Girls book group

### Sundays in February

10am- Worship and Sunday school  
11am- Children's Choir resumes in Feb.  
Feb. 2- Children's Interactive worship,  
Communion, no SS

### Mondays in February

7:30am- Men's Bible Breakfast  
9:30am- Bible Study with Pastor Brooke  
11am- Brown Bag discussion group

### Tuesdays in February

2pm- Balance & Stretch with Tiffany

### Wednesdays, February 5, 12 & 19

6pm- Youth Group Feb 5, 12 & 19  
Confirmation Feb. 12 & 26

### Thursdays in February

7pm- Choir rehearsal

### Saturdays in February

8am- Men's Support Group

### Thursday, February 6

6:30pm- Anti-Racism Team meeting

### Tuesday, February 11

5pm- Simpson meal service

### Wednesday, February 12

3pm- ICA Food Shelf

### Thursday, February 13

1pm- Sarah/Lydia Circle

### Sunday, February 16

11:15am- Contemplative Practice

### Thursday, February 19

12pm- EUMC Blood Drive

### Monday, February 24

1pm- Cover Girls book group

### Wednesday, February 26

3pm- ICA Food Shelf



# FINANCE TEAM REPORT

## 2024 Budget Update:

Through the first 10 months of the year, we have received contributions of slightly more than \$400,000. This puts us ahead of the pace we need to achieve our budgeted contribution amount of \$455,000 and we expect to surpass that budgeted amount in the remaining two months of the year. Our staff, congregation, and leadership team have done an excellent job with financial prudence, keeping expenses below budget by approximately \$45,000. Most of this budget underrun is driven by lower building improvement and maintenance costs, along with a timing gap in filling our music director opening.

## Stewardship Update:

Thank you to everyone who gives generously to support this church. During the year we have seen increased giving and the momentum is carrying into 2025. 2025 estimates of giving cards have been steadily rolling in and we are encouraged to see many of you commit to growing your operating giving in the coming year. This is progressing us towards our goal of increasing giving to support an annual \$600,000 operating budget. A more specific update will be available soon.

## Capital Campaign Update:

As we approach the end of this year, we also mark the conclusion of the 3-year giving period (22-24) for the capital campaign that financed our recent renovations. What a tremendous success, with over \$1.6 Million in donations from 90+ individuals and families. Any additional donations will help continue reducing the remaining ~300K balance on the line of credit.

Tyler Cronk and Beverly Eckhardt

## Holiday Building Hours

The building and office are closed  
Wednesday, December 25  
Thursday, December 26  
Wednesday, January 1



# PURPOSE

Loving Beyond Ourselves

## VISION

To be known as a nurturing, inclusive and courageous Christian community.

## MISSION

Sharing God's love by building community, serving others, and standing for justice.

## CONTACT US

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## STAFF

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*A/V Coordinator*

**JOSH KNOWLES**

*Custodian*

**ALYSSA SMITH**

*Nursery Childcare*



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