



EMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WE WELCOME! WE WORSHIP! WE WITNESS!

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

“It’s never too late to feel great.”

I usually see these words somewhere on my way in to the YMCA where I work out on my day off. It’s a good reminder that it is never too late to try a new habit for our physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

As the new year begins I like to evaluate my practices and consider new ones. If you have been contemplating a new mindfulness practice with God, its “never too late” to get 2025 off with the right start.

I like something that provides online reminders into my email, even though I typically pick up my trusty Bible to read from and feel the pages.

I use a website called “Bible Gateway” to send me a daily reading of Scripture. Over the past few years it has helped me keep on track to get through the New Testament in a Year, The Old Testament, or just have a Psalm of the day.

From year to year I also return to the devotions of Oswald Chambers, whose work is also available online at utmost.org. You can receive something like this in your email each day to read and pray along .

Upper Room Devotionals are available online at upper-room.org, and there is an Upper Room App for your smartphone or tablet. We also have copies of the Upper Room Devotional each

month in the Narthex. Large print copies are available. *The Daily Bread* devotional is also a free resource available in the Narthex.

God’s mercies abound and are new every morning. “Its never too late”- May you find a fresh way to pause this year and listen for God’s voice this year.

Happy New year

Pastor Ben

OUR SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 8:45 Sunday School
- 10:00 Worship



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BISHOP’S DAY APART IN NORTH EAST DISTRICT– FEBRUARY 3RD

Bishop Dan Schwerin will visit the North East District at Appleton: First UMC on Monday, February 3 for a time apart of Bible study and inspiration. Laity are invited 6:30-8:00pm; registration opens at 6:00pm.

Don't miss this chance to meet and be inspired by our new bishop!

Alternate dates include Tuesday 2/4 at Waukesha: First and Wednesday February 2/5 at Onalaska.



Bishop Dan Schwerin

*Reflections from a Circuit Rider— Bishop Dan Schwerin**Can 2025 Be a Year of Grace?*

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”—2 Corinthians 12:9

When I was a teenager, a United Methodist pastor explained grace to me. It changed my life. That same grace continues to change my life. How has grace shaped your life? How do you continue to struggle with grace?

Grace is the unmerited, upbuilding, unconditional love God extends to all people and to the whole creation. United Methodists have an expansive view of grace. We know that grace is always among us, working in love.

United Methodists are a Baskin-Robbins of grace. We proclaim the grace that God gives us before we even know we need it or know how to ask; this is prevenient grace. We proclaim the grace of God for us and for our healing with God; this is justifying grace. The upbuilding grace that attends to growth in love within us is sanctifying grace. Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Our whole lives are a response to grace. I write today to invite you to observe 2025 as a year of grace.

It is a basic truth of ministry that what you pay attention to grows. If we pay attention to mission, mission grows. Attend to Christian formation and knowledge grows. How might we be changed if we focused our lives more and more on grace? What if we used grace sightings in our devotionals and sermons? Or how might we be renewed if we sing about grace?

What if we practiced a grace that allows us to demonstrate our unity in Christ as a faith community? Currently, we live in a moment when powerful moneyed forces have divided this country. I believe this is an opportunity to make grace greater than our differences. I would want us to be clear that we are not proffering cheap grace for bullying, manipulation, or accommodating bad behavior that is harmful or abusive. Grace and repentance are sisters and should travel together, for grace without authentic repentance is abuse.

What if our personal anti-racism work featured grace-grounded reflection and honest conversations about blind spots and grace for others, and grace for deeper conversations and then action? What if grace called us all to grow in cultural competency so that we might grow in faith together?

What would happen to us if we framed mission by showing grace in our communities and world? Instead of focusing only on business at our council meetings, we might ask, where did we see grace today? How might we practice grace and extend grace to more and more in our community? Or where is grace leading our congregation now? I will be keeping a grace journal just to see what God will do.

For the days ahead, I will remind us that grace is also for the stranger and sojourner in our land. Leviticus 19:33-34 reminds us, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Next year we will enjoy a year of experimentation for mission as we try new forms of ministry for impact. Some 54% percent of Northern Illinois United Methodist congregations and 60% of Wisconsin United Methodist churches have a weekly worship attendance of 35 people or fewer. Next year we will need grace for experimentation as churches yield to God’s call forward in new ways.

Every day the ministry holds risk and learning from experiments. We will need to experiment with new forms of ministry and offer support to local churches for their ministry as they try to respond to their post-COVID context. We need to turn our systems toward learning and sharing so that we can support local church vitality as fully as possible. What will be the impact of having two conferences—the whole episcopal area—attend to a focus on grace? Our annual conferences will celebrate the theme “Grace is Sufficient” and continue it through the end of 2025.

My life was changed by grace and it continues to be changed. I believe people are looking for grace and bearers of a God working in love. I pray that a year of grace will deepen and strengthen us. Let’s try it!

Know that I am praying for you.

Thank you.
Peace,

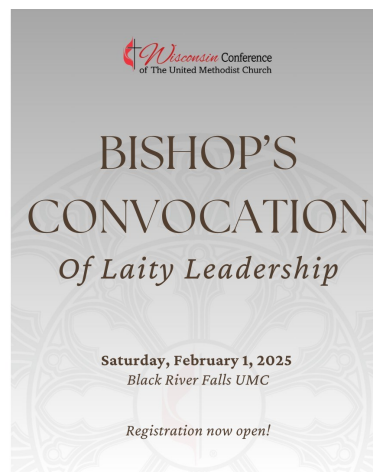


Dan Schwerin, Bishop

BISHOP LAITY CONVOCATION OF LEADERSHIP IS FEBRUARY 1ST

The Conference Board of Laity and Bishop Schwerin invite Wisconsin lay folks to a day of Bible study and inspiration, encouragement to broaden your God-given gifts and leadership, and learning about UMC connectional ministries within The United Methodist Church.

The event will take place 9:00am to 3:00pm at Black River Falls UMC. Registration is due by January 21, and the \$10 fee includes a soup and salad lunch. Learn more and sign up here (<https://na.eventscloud.com/website/81117/>).



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH NEWS

The United Women in Faith invites you to register today to join a book study via Zoom:

When We Walk By:

Forgotten Humanity, Broken Systems, and the Role We Can Each Play in Ending Homelessness in America

by Kevin F. Adler and Donald W. Burnes

A thoughtful read that teaches us the real truth about homelessness. *When We Walk By* takes an urgent look at homelessness in America showing our loss when we choose to walk past or ignore our neighbors in shelters.

- How we can shift away from "us versus them" thinking.
- Many Americans are just one missed paycheck away from being homeless.
- Who "the homeless" really are--and why that might surprise you.
- How we can help, starting today.

This event is sponsored by Church Women United in Wisconsin. Any interested woman in the state of Wisconsin is welcome to attend via Zoom. No charge to participate, but registration is required.

Register by E-mailing Marilyn Stone: mmstone52@att.net

Provide: Name, Phone #, and E-mail

**You can get a copy of this book through Amazon or the library.

Reading Schedule

- Wed., Jan. 15 - Part 1: Humanity (Pages 1-85)
- Wed., Jan. 29 - Part 2: Systems (Pages 89-163)
- Wed., Feb. 12 - Part 3: Solutions (Pages 167-235)

The UWIF also would like to thank the Emmanuel congregation for its participation and response in the Cookies, Fudge, and Soup Sale in December. Over \$1,000 was raised!





Children and Youth helped to tell the "Charlie Brown" Christmas Story as part of our Advent Series on December 22nd!



We had great music as part of our program and pageant on December 22nd, under music director Ryan Korb's leadership.



Kenzie Arnoldussen puts some finishing touches on the tree on December 1st.

STEWARDSHIP NOTE FROM THE WISCONSIN UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION

As we turn the page on the calendar and step into a new year, January offers us a wonderful opportunity to reflect, reset, and recommit ourselves to living as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. Stewardship is about more than finances—it encompasses every aspect of our lives: our time, talents, treasures, and the care we show for God’s creation.

The Biblical Basis for Stewardship Scripture reminds us that everything we have belongs to God. Genesis 2:15 shows us that even from the beginning, humanity was

called to care for creation: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Similarly, 1 Peter 4:10 encourages us to use our gifts to serve others: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” This year, let us take these words to heart and seek to be intentional in how we manage the resources, relationships, and responsibilities entrusted to us.

Personal Goal-Setting for Stewardship

The start of a new year is a natural time to set goals. Consider these questions as you prayerfully plan your year:

- **Time:** How can you dedicate more time to prayer, worship, and service this year? Can you set aside a regular time for volunteering or participating in church activities?
- **Talents:** What gifts and skills has God given you? Are there ways you can use them to bless your church, your community, or those in need?
- **Treasures:** Reflect on your financial stewardship. Is this the year to begin tithing, increase your giving, or support a specific ministry or mission project?

LAY LEADER THOUGHTS– JIM JUSTMAN

Did you have a “night light” as a child?

The light was set by someone we loved to chase away our fears of the darkness.

So it is with our loving God.

In the gift of Jesus we are given “the light of the world.”

“A light that darkness will never overcome.” (John 1)

May the light of our wondrous God bless your New Year with hope, faith and love in all things great and small.

Jim Justman



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WE WORSHIP!
WE WITNESS!
