

The Chimes

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
DECEMBER 2025

Church Events

From Our Pastor...

“Practicing Hope Here at Sterling Wesley”

The other morning, I was driving down Route 2 when I found myself behind a tractor going, shall we say, the speed of sanctification—slow, steady, and determined to help me develop Christian patience. I had somewhere to be, but the tractor clearly believed I had nowhere more important to go than exactly three miles per hour behind it. As I sat there tapping the steering wheel, I sensed a familiar Advent whisper: **“This is what waiting looks like.”**

Honestly, Advent in Sterling sometimes feels exactly like that. The sun rises late. The frost on the windshield requires three rounds of scraping. Black ice hides under the snow like it has a sense of humor. And everyone is just trying to make it down the driveway without becoming a sermon illustration. But maybe—just maybe—our Midwest winter is actually the perfect classroom for practicing hope.

This year, our Bishop Dan Schwerin invited us to live into **The Year of Grace**—a reminder that God always moves first. God searches for us when we feel scattered, lifts us when we slip, and gently turns us toward a better path when we’ve wandered. And next year, we step into a new theme: **Practicing Hope**. Not vague optimism. Not wishful thinking. Not “maybe things will get better someday.” Practicing Hope means finding and cultivating hope right in the middle of real life—right here in Sterling, right here in our church family, right here in our own hearts.

And that is exactly what our Advent sermon series is calling us toward.

We’ve talked about **preparing our hearts**, not perfecting our lives.

Tuesdays & Thursdays @ 4:00 pm

Exercise Group (Activity Room)

Wednesdays @ 9:30 am

Bible Study (Fireside Room)

Thursdays @ 2 pm or 6:30 pm

Fiber Group-Knitting & Crocheting
(Fireside Room)

Saturdays @ 8:00 am

Men’s Bible Study (Fireside Room)

Thurs. 12/4 @ 9:30 am Greeting Card
Ministry (Fellowship Hall)

Thurs. 12/4 @ 2 pm Fiber Group
(Fireside Room)

Sun. 12/7 & Sun. 12/14 Children’s
Christmas Program Practice

Sun. 12/14 Children’s Christmas
Program (10 am service), Ugly
Sweater Sunday & Youth Group

Thurs. 12/18 @ 11:30 am Ladies
Luncheon @ Angelo’s, (Sterling) and
@ 6:30 Fiber Group (Fireside Room)

12/24 Christmas Eve Services
@ 7PM & 11 PM

12/25 Merry Christmas!!

1/1/2026 Happy New Year!!

We've remembered that **new shoots grow from stumps**, even when life feels cut down. We've proclaimed that **fear doesn't get the final say** because Emmanuel is already with us. We've met **the Good Shepherd**, who gathers, guides, and sends us to care for others. And we've seen that **Christ's light finds us**, even on icy mornings when we almost wipe out on the porch.

These truths are not just theology. They are invitations.

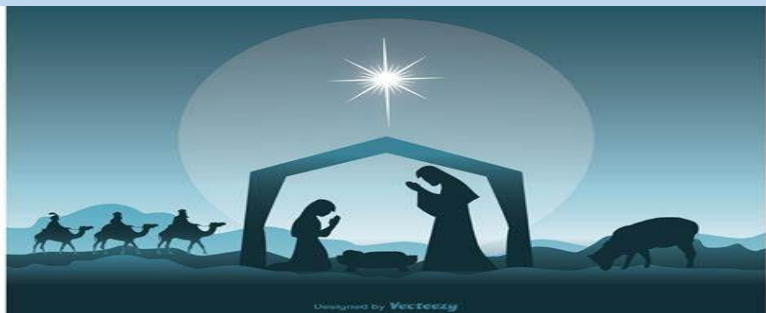
Because hope grows through small, daily faithfulness—

- through kindness at the grocery store,
- through a phone call to someone lonely,
- through generosity that warms cold nights,
- through prayer whispered before the day begins,
- through choosing love in conversations that could go another direction.

I believe God is growing hope among us—in our worship, in our children and youth, in our service to the community, and in the love we share. Hope is not far away. It is already sprouting in this church, in this city, in every act of grace and courage we offer.

As we journey toward Christmas and into a new year, may we be a people who don't just feel hope—but **practice it**, share it, and live it out loud.

With love and gratitude for each of you, Pastor Paul



December Worship Schedule

12/7 Second Sunday of Advent –Peace
2 Sam. 7:5, 16; Isaiah 11:1-4; Luke 1:26-33

When Your Life Feels Like a Stump

12/14 Third Sunday of Advent –Joy
Isaiah 7:2, 13-16; Matthew 1:18-23

**When Fear Says “Delayed,”
Emmanuel says, “I’m Here.”**

Christmas Program/Youth Group

12/21 Fourth Sunday of Advent-Love
John 10:11-16

Chasing Peace, Finding the Shepherd

12/24 **Christmas Eve Services at
7PM & 11PM**

12/28 First Sunday after Christmas
Luke 2:13-10

Light That Finds Us When We slip

Birthdays



- Dec. 1 JJ Campbell
- Dec. 2 Derek Fitzanko, Coralee Jacobs
- Dec. 4 Emily Schwingle
- Dec. 8 Kaylee Blackburn
- Dec. 13 Sue Morris, Julie VanAusdal
- Dec. 15 Luther Stutzman
- Dec. 16 Nick Ceruzzi
- Dec. 18 Zephany Drew
- Dec. 19 Chad Duncan
- Dec. 22 Elliot Noble, Sally Unterzuber
- Dec. 23 Elaine Hilger
- Dec. 24 Lenna Drew
- Dec. 27 Sarah Rodriguez, Sierra Sotelo
- Dec. 30 Mallory Osborn, Lacey Young,
Sandra Minor
- Dec. 31 Maddux Osborn

Anniversaries

- Dec. 11 Rich & Sue Morris
- Dec. 12 Roger & Nancy Wait
- Dec. 16 Darrin & Amy Driscoll
- Dec. 23 Toby & Heather Johnson
- Dec. 28 Lowell & Coralee Jacobs,
Greg & Chris Gallentine
- Dec. 31 Rick & Karen Palmer

Trunk-n-Treat



**Chili Winners-First Place: Tony McCoy, Second Place: Steve Lopez
Dessert Winners- First Place: Rita Smith, Second Place: Dave Fredericks**



The Missions Committee would like to thank the following people for their contributions for the Chili Cook Off/ Dessert Auction. We would not have been able to raise \$1,000 for the Sauk Valley Food Bank with out you. Chili Cooks; Cory Canas, Amber Celletti, Jan Glover, Paul Lee, Steve Lopez, Tony McCoy and Andy Pitsch. Dessert makers; Carolyn Allen, Renee Duncan, Dave Fredericks, Deana Hermes, Carolyn Heuck, Amy Lopez, Jeanette Rhodes, Marianne Rosser, Jamie Schwingle, Rita Smith and Sharon Taylor. We'd also like to thank those non-Missions people who helped with either setup, during the event or cleanup; Carolyn Allen, Renee Duncan, Dave Fredericks, Steve & Amy Lopez, Lynn Majewski, Jean Moe, Andy Pitsch and Larry Schuchard. I personally would like to thank those on my Missions team for all their hard work; Elisa Gatz, Jan Glover, Beth Mathew and Sharon Taylor.

Missions Corner

Thank you for your contributions to **Loose Coins** in the month of **November**. We were able to raise \$137.43 for **FISH Food Pantry** plus two checks specified for FISH equaling \$14,750.

Thanksgiving envelopes also contributed \$ 105 to the **FISH** ministry with your generous donations!

The **Thanksgiving Baskets** ministry provided additional funds of \$ 1,000 that was enough for **40 Baskets** for the Township to purchase meals for the community!

Loose Coins for **December** is **Loaves & Fishes**

Christmas Eve & Christmas Envelopes is **Loaves & Fishes/UMCOR Disaster Relief Fund**

December we will be collecting **Shampoo** for pantries. We collected 24 dish soaps in November.

Announcements

Wesley's Greeting Card Ministry will meet Thursday, December 4th at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall to prepare and send cards. Please join us!

You will notice starting in December a Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall with handmade woolen ornaments. These are available to take for a free will donation. Any money raised will be used for the Greeting Card Ministry to help with pay for postage and cards.



Hello Lunch Ladies,

Our next lunch will be December 18th at 11:30 at Angelos in Sterling.

Come and enjoy a festive time.

I will e-mail closer to the time for reservations.

Beth Mathew



Thank you

Thank you so much for all the cards, chimes and mail that was sent to Susie Hondley! She appreciated each and everyone of you!!

Carol Fox family of Susie Hondley

Thank you to everyone who helped with the church's Christmas decorations. Many hands make light work! We appreciate everything you did to help.

January 4th please plan to help us take down all of the Advent decorations between the two services. We will take everything to the activity and pack away.

We honored our Veterans with heartfelt gratitude on **Veterans Sunday** for their courage, sacrifice, and service to our community and country, enabling us to enjoy peace, safety, and security in our lives.

(Picture after the 10 am service)



We had a sacred time of **All Saints Sunday** to honor and remember the lives of those who have gone before us, celebrating faith and the legacy they leave behind.



We love our Children's Message time with Pastor Paul!

Baptism Sunday

Welcome Savannah, Olivia and Jaxon to Christ's Holy church



Sauk Valley Food Bank



Salvation Army Bell Ringing



The Redemption of **Scrooge**

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY
WEDNESDAY 9:30 AM

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS,
PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE OR PASTOR PAUL

Wesley
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Advent Bible Study

Prepare your heart for Christmas by joining our Wednesday Advent Bible Study as we journey through the book *The Redemption of Scrooge*.

Christmas Program on Dec. 14 (Sun)

Celebrate the joy of the season with Children's Christmas Program! Watch as our children bring the story of Jesus' birth to life through songs, readings, and a heartwarming performance that will fill your heart with the wonder of Christmas.



3rd Theme of Advent **JOY**

UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER SUNDAY
DECEMBER 14TH, 2025

Ugly Sweater Sunday on Dec. 14 (Sun)

Join us the Sunday after Christmas for Ugly Sweater Sunday - a fun and festive way to celebrate the season together. Wear your most creative, colorful, or downright outrageous Christmas sweater and enjoy a lighthearted time of worship and fellowship. Let's share laughs, memories, and the joy of Christ.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Experience the wonder of Christmas at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Services (at 7 pm and 11 pm). Join us for a sacred evening of scripture, carols, and the glow of candlelight as we celebrate the birth of Christ, the Light of the World.

Christmas Eve
— a savior is born —

7 PM **Service** **11 PM**

Wesley
UNIFIED METHODIST

Worship helpers for December

December 8am Head Ushers: Rebecca Tieman & Shannon Klausing

Door Greeter(s)	Usher/Acolytes	Liturgist
12/7 Jan Glover Larry Schuchard	Rebecca Tieman Shannon Klausing	Brenley Johnson Nancy Pitsch
12/14 Tony & Katie Mccoy	Rebecca Tieman Shannon Klausing	Nancy Pitsch
12/21 Rita Smith	Rebecca Tieman Shannon Klausing	Rory Smith
12/28 Jan Glover Larry Schuchard	Rebecca Tieman Shannon Klausing	Jean Moe



December 10AM Head Ushers: Steve Lopez & Bill Parker

Door Greeter (s)	Usher/Acolytes	Liturgist	Matthew Meetings
12/7 Justin & Kala Allen	Eric/James Allen Jaxson Williams	Nancy Pitsch	Christmas Program Practice Devon & others!
12/14 Jessica & Craig Truedson	Bob & Cheryl Allen	Nancy Pitsch	Christmas Practice 9-9:45 Christmas Program
12/21 Mark & Sharon Taylor	Andy Pitsch & Abe Nuetzel Steve Lopez & Bill Parker	Gia Campbell Nancy Pitsch	Jamie Schwingle
12/28 Carolyn Heuck Carolyn Allen	Steve Lopez/Bill Parker	Amy Lopez	No Matthew Meetings

Advent Scripture Readers/ Candle Lighters 2025

		8 am Reader/Candle Lighter(s)	10 am Reader/Candle Lighter (s)
1st Sunday- <i>Hope</i>	November 30th	Darla Ewing Barb Quick	Zach Cordell Beth Wicks
2nd Sunday- <i>Peace</i>	December 7th	Jaz'Mya Castaneda Brenley Johnson	Mary Sue Puckett Sharon Puckett
3rd Sunday- <i>JOY</i>	December 14th	Fitzanko Family	Ryan, Kaylie & Tatum Blackburn
4th Sunday- <i>Love</i>	December 21st	Renee Duncan Lynn Majewski	Roger Jacobs, Deana Hermes Mark & Sharon Taylor
Christmas Eve <i>Christ Candle</i>	December 24th	7 pm Service Curt, Jaime & Josh Greenfield	11 pm Service Matt, Stacey, Ellie, Myla & Sadie Wendelken

Wesley United Methodist Church

2200 16th Ave.
Sterling, IL 61081

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Wesley United Methodist Church

Phone: (815) 625-1968

Website: www.sterlingwesley.org

Email: office@sterlingwesley.org

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Join us for in-person Sunday services
8:00 am and 10:00 am

We will continue to Livestream worship
on Facebook at 10 a.m. Find us on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/SterlingWesleyUMC>

Mission Corner

Wesley has always been a mission-minded church. The purpose of this space is to keep the congregation informed of our various mission efforts.

We currently are receiving:

- December's collection for local pantries is **shampoo**.
- Travel-sized toiletries
- **Loose coins** to benefit **Loaves & Fishes** the month of **December**.
- Christmas Eve & Christmas Envelopes is **Loaves & Fishes/UMCOR Disaster Relief Fund**