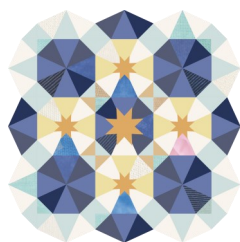


December 2024

UPC NEWS



United Presbyterian Church Communicator



WORDS
FOR THE **BEGINNING**

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year rushes in. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving—and yet, we feel the weight of many things coming to an end. The world as we know it spins madly on. What are the reminders we need in order to move faithfully through this threshold of endings and beginnings? This year's Advent series comes from A Sanctified Art and is filled with blessings, with the words we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. The weekly themes may feel like the lessons we teach to children, but in reality, these are lessons we continue to learn and relearn as adults. I invite you to enter this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead. In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. And yet, Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. As we also move through new chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith. No matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, let love be our beginning. With Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, *Pastor Michelle*

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS – 2 OPTIONS

This year the Christian Education Committee is offering two different Advent devotionals; one corresponds with the worship series, and the other follows the traditional readings of the Revised Common Lectionary. One is available as an e-reader, and the other as a PDF, or printed booklets. Please consider printing your booklet at home if you are able.

Words for the Beginning: Our friends at A Sanctified Art have provided a special e-reader version of an Advent devotional, which corresponds with the Worship series. You can access it on your computer and mobile devices: online.flippingbook.com/view/811735764/

In order to protect their work, please refrain from sharing this link or posting it on social media. This devotional contains art, poems, hymns, commentary, and reflection prompts. It is meant to be read at your own pace throughout the season of Advent and Christmas; it concludes with Epiphany.

Patterns of Divine Possibility: An Advent search for God's diverse ordering Step into a journey of discovery this Advent with a devotional that challenges us to see beyond familiar binaries and embrace the complex, natural patterns of our creator in the world. In this devotional, Presbyterian Outlook Editor/Publisher Teri McDowell Ott invites us to open our eyes to the intricate designs of God's creation that often go unnoticed. In a world dominated by binary thinking – light vs. dark, good vs. evil – this devotion encourages us to look for the more, to recognize that God's patterns are nuanced, complex, and always beyond the limited constructs we impose. It challenges us to explore faith as trusting in the unseen patterns and embracing a fuller understanding of God's handiwork. These devotionals include reflections for every day in Advent, beginning with Sunday, December 1, 2024, and ending on Christmas day. Each entry consists of a reflection and prayer. On Saturdays, the reflection includes artwork from A Sanctified Art. On Sundays, the reflection engages the Revised Common Lectionary readings. The PDF is attached to this email and the Weekend Reminder, and a few copies will be available in the Overflow room.

ADVENT REFLECTION WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Join us for a lite supper and Advent reflection connected to the Sunday sermon. Wednesday, **December 4 and 11** at 5:20-6:20 pm in the North Lounge.

SESSION SUMMARY

At their November 19, 2024 meeting, the Session of UPC:

- Opened with prayer and a devotional
- Discussed the 2025 UPC Commissioner and Alternate to the Presbytery of Wyoming (2/22 zoom, 5/10 zoom, 9/26,27 Casper)
- Approved the 2025 dates for the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion
- Approved the indoor “Garage Sale” request from Family Promise
- Authorized Personnel Committee’s request for holiday gift cards to the staff
- Approved a 2% salary increase for the staff
- Waived the building use fee for UW groups impacted by recent office closures
- Received written reports from the staff and committees
- Adjourned with expressions of gratitude



ADVENT WREATH CANDLE LIGHTING

UPC has a wonderful tradition of inviting households of various sizes and ages to light a candle in the Advent Wreath each week of Advent, and lead the Call to Worship. If you would like to participate, please [SIGN UP HERE](#).

THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE – DEC 21, 6:30 PM

The Longest Night Service: A Liturgy for Endings and Beginnings is a unique service designed to make space for difficult emotions during the holiday season, particularly grief around endings and anxiety around new beginnings.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS FROM PASTOR MICHELLE

My parents, Ron & Phyllis, send their deep gratitude for your prayers. They have felt them and seen them. After a difficult late summer and fall, they are both doing well. Thanks be to God!

LAY PASTOR PROGRAM - EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The Synod of the Rocky Mountains (and all the Presbyteries) have partnered with Dubuque Theological Seminary to offer training for those who are interested in becoming a Commissioned Lay Pastor or just taking one of the classes to help support the ministry of your congregation or the larger Presbytery. The preaching class has already taken place. However, the next scheduled class to come is:

- January 6, 2025: Reformed Theology and Presbyterian Confessions
- March 10, 2025: Foundations of Christian Education
- August 11, 2025: Reformed Worship and Sacraments
- October 13, 2025: Presbyterian Polity

The cost is lowered drastically, it is only \$150 to take one course – paid to the Presbytery of Wyoming. Contact your General Presbyter, Rev Jeromey Howard, to let him know you are interested/have questions/participating, and then contact the University of Dubuque as soon as possible and at least a week before the class begins. You can reach Becky Shellabarger at UDTs at rshellabarger@dbq.edu or DERegistration@dbq.edu.



COOKIE SALE

The UPC annual cookie sale will be held on **December 7th**, from, 9:00 am to noon. We are asking for donations of 4 dozen cookies from each church family. Donations can be dropped off at the church between 8:00 and 3:00 the week of December 2nd. All proceeds from the cookie sale will be donated to Family Promise to assist them in helping families in Albany County. Please see Michelle Harris if you have any questions.

COOKIES AND CAROLING

Join the Deacons for an old-fashioned Christmas caroling and cookie delivery to our homebound members after church on **December 8th**. We will meet in the North Lounge at 10:45 am to gather for carpooling.

TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Studies for the next few weeks will focus on various scriptures with Advent and Christmas reflections. All are welcome to attend the 10:00am meetings. For more information, contact Celeste Kobulnicky or Mary Prather.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

December is a busy month for everyone, hopefully you will find the fun in our busyness for advent.

LOGOS will meet on our normal Wednesday times on December 4th and 11th. Our LOGOS children and youth will perform “**The Backwards Christmas Pageant**” on **Sunday December 15** following worship. After the pageant we invite everyone down to the Fellowship Hall for a chili lunch. We will then take a break from LOGOS and return on January 8.

Our **mid and sr high youth groups** will be joining our deacons for cookie delivering and caroling following worship on **December 8**. When we return to the church, we will have lunch and hold our annual Gingerbread House decorating contest.

DECEMBER SERMON SERIES

Sunday worship live stream service can be found at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyLkd7kE_l0acTnxJQ_Eg and through the UPC website.



MISSION

CHRISTIAN LOVE, COMPASSION, AND TOLERANCE IN ACTION...

-Holiday Bazaar—Mission hopes that you've be able to check out the books, puzzles, and other great gift items following worship services on Sunday. All proceeds from these highly discounted items will be added to the funds generated by the Cookie Sale to be donated to Family Promise to help them with the reorganization/revitalization that has been going on since the arrival of their new director and case manager. Don't forget to pick up your pecan, pistachios, and soup mixes that will be moved to the Cookie Sale Area on the 7th when the UPC Bazaar will be closed on that day as UPAVIM is returning to the Overflow Room to sell their wonderful free trade items. Again, UPC will receive 10% of their sales that goes into UPC's Annual Budget. When they were here last summer, UPC received over \$400 from their proceeds.

Community Holidays



-Community Holidays—[SIGN UP HERE](#) for this year's Community Holiday event. **The unwrapped gifts need to be at UPC by Sunday, December 15th.** You need put your gifts under the tree in the Fireplace Lounge. Your surplus wrapping and decorations are also needed. You also have the opportunity to sign up for one of the "hands-on" opportunities by helping to sort UPC's gifts here at the church starting at 11:00 a.m. on the 15th, to shop on the 16th for any needed "missing" items (you will be reimbursed by the Mis-

sion Budget); to help with gift sorting at the Baptist Church during the evenings between the 10th and 17th, to help fill the cookie/candy bags at 8:00 a.m. on the 18th at the Baptist Church, to help with gift distribution at the Baptist Church on the 18th and 19th (10:00 a.m. to noon and 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. on both days), and to deliver gifts for those recipients unable to get to the church. Please ask Nancy Lick or Russ Oliver if you have any questions.

-Please check out the **Presbyterian Giving Catalog** to see if there are any initiatives that you can support or can use as a gift. You will be supporting our Presbyterian Co-workers (missionaries) in their work throughout the world. Mission will be getting the 2025 Catalogs for distribution soon. These catalogs are extremely informative as to where and how we Presbyterians are involved in areas of great need.

-The upcoming **Christmas Joy Offering** provides aid to all levels of our church workers in times of crisis as well as supports future church leadership. Please prayerfully consider these initiatives when the information handouts are given out.

-Syria/Lebanon— El-Marie Parker, our co-worker in Lebanon/Syria who was recently at UPC, requested through Bob Gerrard who heads up the Wyoming Presbytery's initiative for that region that the crisis in Lebanon is escalating due to the recent rocker attacks. The church that UPC has supported in the past in Tyre has been severely damaged as has the minister's home. This church was providing several successful programs with the refugees in Lebanon. Currently, food and shelter are critical needs. The Presbytery currently has \$5500 in this account and Mission has recently sent the \$1000 budgeted in its 2024 Budget to add to this fund. We are asking Presbytery to designate half to Lebanon and half to continue our support of the Children's Clinic in Aleppo Syria. Please direct your questions to Nancy Lick or Gerald VanCampen. Nancy Weidel recently attended via zoom the Fall Gathering of the National Syria/Lebanon Group that UPC supports. She reports that several of the speakers in Lebanon and Syria were really terrific. She also reported that our co-worker, El Marie Parker, announced her resignation after over 11 years of service. Mission wishes her well and will be watching the collaborations that she established as to their on-going viability. It is through these systems that our donations get through to these areas.

Together we anticipate the coming of the Christ Child. Together we give our gifts and talents in gratitude for this greater gift.

GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE

-Tiny Tim

WOMEN'S & MEN'S GROUP

UPC Men! Please join us at Perkins on Saturday, **December 7** and **14** at 8:00 am for great conversation! All are welcome!

Mary Martha Circle will meet Wednesday, **December 18th** at the home of Freda Dixon at 12:00 noon for lunch. Janice Shuster will lead our study "Let Justice Roll Down, God's call to Care for Neighbors and all Creation. All women are invited to join us for prayer, study and fellowship. Please let Freda know if you can attend so she has a place at the table for you.

Rebekah Circle will meet on Thursday, **December 19**, from 9:30 to 11:30 at the home of Rita VerPloeg, 2518 Knadler Street. Corrine Seebart will lead us in discussion of Lesson 12 of our study book, The Good and Beautiful Life. For information, contact Pam at pamelagalbreath23@gmail.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

The church office is open Monday-Friday, 8:00-3:00pm. Rev. Michelle Bacon's office hours are 9:00-5:00 Monday-Thursday. If you would like to make an appointment to meet with her please call the church office. On Tuesdays, from 10:00 am-noon Pastor Michelle is in her office available for conversation. Feel free to drop in.

Any information you would like shared in the weekend reminders needs to be emailed to the office by Wednesday morning.

The church office will be closed Dec 24-Jan 1.

UPC's ELDERS AND DEACONS



Elders: Art Snoke, Nancy Lick, Hank Kobulnicky, John Galbreath, David Jones, Elizabeth Williams, Cam Collamer, Corrine Seebart

Deacons: Nancy Fillion, Linda Haynes, Linda Sheets, Pam Galbreath, Gerald Van Campen, Marla Smith

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT UPC

For a full calendar of events click on the calendar link. If you or your group wants to add something to the UPC calendar please bring it or send to the church office for approval. [CLICK HERE](#) for calendar.



REPORTS AND SESSION MINUTES

The UPC Session Minutes and reports can be read at our website at upclaramie.org/minutes/. Call the church office if you are in need of the password.