



PATHWAYS

Emmanuel Community United Methodist Church



DECEMBER 2025

Emmanuel Community United Methodist Church Monthly Newsletter

N84 W16707 Menomonee Avenue, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051 ✧ 262-251-3830 ✧ www.ec-umc.com

ADVENT 2026

ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

Emmanuel - God with us...

At Home (11/30)

At Work (12/7)

At Play (12/14) 8:30 & 10 AM in Celebration Hall

At Rest (12/21) 8:30 & 10 AM in Sanctuary



SOUP, STORIES, AND SONG

Wednesdays (12/3, 12/10, 12/17) @ 6:30-7:30 PM

We'll enjoy a light meal together in Celebration Hall, sing a carol or two, and then Pastor Matt will tell a Christmas story.

The Kitchen Klub will provide soup and salad and various Ministry Teams will supply desserts.

Bring the whole family - and feel free to invite others to join you.



ADVENT STUDY – THURSDAYS IN DECEMBER

Contact: Janet Ray; JanetR@ec-umc.com

Investigation is the motivation for this Advent study, Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christmas*. Is the nativity story true? What does the Bible actually say (and NOT say)? How accurate is it? Is it trustworthy? Award-winning legal journalist and former atheist, Lee Strobel weighs the evidence to distinguish myth from truth.

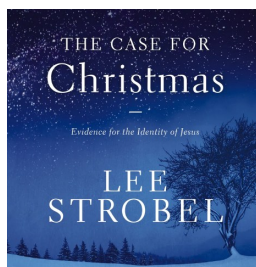
Choose the morning or afternoon session in Fellowship Hall on

Thursdays, 12/4 & 12/11 & 12/18

10 – 11 AM or 5 – 6 PM*

If you'd like to do additional reading (not required), books are available for \$5 in the church office.

*Chancel Choir members - bring your dinner to eat between 6 and 7.



CONTEMPLATIVE ADVENT SERVICE

Join us on Friday, 12/5 for refreshments in Fellowship Hall at 6:30 PM and our quiet, contemplative service of Advent preparation in the Sanctuary at 7 PM.

This service is designed for women pre-teen and older. Invite a friend who might appreciate a moment to breathe during this busy season.



CHILDREN'S PAGEANT, 12/14

ECUMC's 2025 Christmas Program "Manger Tales" will be performed on Sunday, 12/14, at both 8:30 and 10:00 AM in Celebration Hall. The children have been rehearsing their lines and practicing their parts in anticipation of wowing everyone this Advent season. We are all looking forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



ALL-CHOIR SUNDAY, 12/21

Our All-Choir Sunday is a musical celebration of the birth of Jesus featuring all our talented vocal and bell choirs.



In this issue...

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- p. 6 YAHAS, Special Music, Giving & Celebrating
- p. 7 Creation Tips
- p. 8 ECUMC December Calendar

A WORD FROM PASTOR MATT

Pastor Matt Hadley; MattH@ec-umc.com

A Christmas Letter

Dear Emmanuel Community Family,

Several years ago, a United Methodist pastor started a movement by publishing a little book titled *Christmas Is Not Your Birthday*. The message was simple yet profound — Christmas isn't about what we receive, but about how we give. It's about honoring the One whose birth we celebrate by loving others in His name.

Jesus said in Matthew 25:37, 40 (CEV):

Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, 'When did we give you something to eat or drink?' ... The king will answer, 'Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me.'

This year, our Emmanuel family has an opportunity to live those words in a tangible way. The Falls Area Food Pantry exists to "gather and distribute nutritious food to residents in need in the greater Menomonee Falls area." Their mission also includes raising awareness of hunger in our community and providing opportunities for individuals to serve one another.

We know that food pantries often overflow with donations in December—but when the deep cold of January and February sets in, the shelves often go bare. That's why this year every offering given in the special Christmas envelopes will go entirely to the Falls Area Food Pantry.



Why are we doing this? Because we are blessed to be a blessing. Our mission at

Emmanuel is to imitate Christ together. In Matthew 25, Jesus makes it clear that what we do—or don't do—for those in need is what we do to or for Him. It's His birthday, and this is our gift to Him.



Of course, we still encourage your faithful support of Emmanuel through your regular tithes and offerings, which sustain our ministries and keep our church strong.

But this special offering is above and beyond—it's an act of gratitude and compassion, a Christmas gift to Christ Himself through the hungry and hurting in our community.

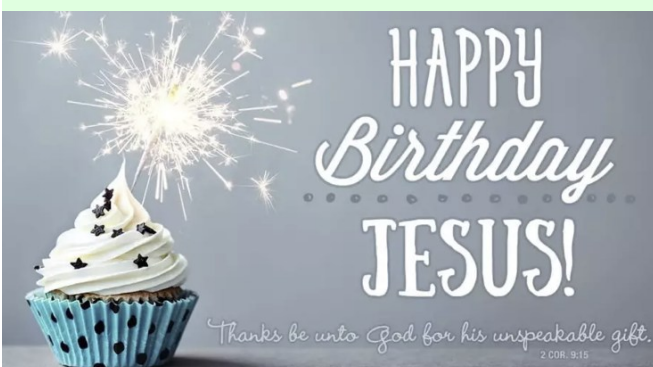
Will this compromise our budget? We believe not. We have faith that the God who has provided for us so generously for 180 years will continue to provide for our needs as we serve others in love.

God planted Emmanuel Community United Methodist Church in Menomonee Falls to be a light of faith, hope, and love—and we continue to shine that light together.

This Christmas, I will be making a special gift beyond my regular pledge, and I invite you to join me. Let's spread the word, invite others to give, and together make Christ's love known in our community.

May the light of Christ shine through you this Christmas and always. With gratitude and joy,

Pastor Matt



CHURCH OFFICE

262-251-3830 Church@ec-umc.com

Hours: Monday–Thursday, 9 AM–1 PM

The Office will be closed 12/24-26 for Christmas and 1/1 & 1/2 for New Year's Day

THANKS FOR YOUR 2026 PLEDGES

A Heartfelt Thank You: Our Successful Pledge Drive

We are absolutely thrilled and profoundly grateful to share the wonderful news that this year's Annual Pledge Drive was a success!

We extend our deepest gratitude to every single member of the congregation who prayerfully considered their commitment and submitted a pledge. Your generosity and dedication to the future of our church home are truly inspiring.

This year's drive not only met but exceeded last year's total contributions, setting a new benchmark for support and enthusiasm within our community. Here is a comparison to last year's pledge giving:

2025 - 109 pledges - \$410,175

2026 - 108 pledges - \$426,978 (as of 11/23/25)

This speaks volumes about the faith commitment we share. Your pledges ensure that we can continue to fully fund our vital ministries, maintain our beautiful facility, and expand our outreach programs in the coming year.



Also important to note is that non-pledge giving as a percentage of total giving has decreased. A few years ago, 50% of our total giving was not through pledges, now it is 25%. This shift is a testament to the congregation's growing commitment to pro-

portional giving and financial stability. It provides a reliable foundation that allows our leadership to plan for the future with greater confidence and vision.

Thank you once again for your faithfulness, sacrifices, and belief in the mission we share. We also appreciate your many gifts of time and talent.

Your giving is an investment in the spiritual life of our congregation and the countless lives we touch.

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee,

Gary Wilkes Stewardship Committee Chair

DID YOU KNOW? You can give directly from your checking account *without* using a credit or debit card through the church website? Giving this way rather than through an EFT (electronic funds transfer) may save both you and the church bank charges.

If you are interested in converting your EFT to a gift through the church website please contact Anna Thompson,

Financial Secretary and she will assist you. Email or text at annavbthomp@gmail.com or 320-309-2003.

CHRISTMAS IS THE TIME FOR GIVING

This Christmas season, you will have the opportunity to give special gifts to your family and friends and also benefit the Mission Ministry projects.

There will be a **Mitten/Hat Tree** in Fellowship Hall, and as in past years, you can put mittens, gloves, and hats on the tree or in the basket next to it. They will be delivered to Rooted & Rising and other places where they are needed.



New this year, there will be Christmas trees outside Sanctuary and Celebration Hall and in Fellowship Hall, that have envelopes attached with stickers on the front, representing various ECUMC missions.

When you take one, inside you'll find a card that says "A Christmas Gift in Honor of _____, From _____. A donation of \$_____ has been made in your honor to (name of ministry such as R&R Food Center,

Falls Area Food Pantry, Habitat for Humanity, etc.)" Put your donation in the envelope (cash or checks made out to ECUMC with specific ministry in the memo line) and drop it in the offering plate or send it to the church office. Then give the card as a gift! A great way to benefit someone in need and give a Christmas present.

Finally, our **"Stuff the Sleigh"** food drive ends

12/14. Donations will benefit Rooted & Rising.

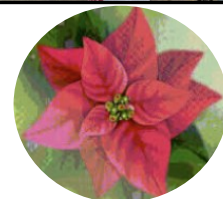


POINSETTIA ORDERS

Order sheets for poinsettias are available in the bulletin or office. Checks should be made to ECUMC with Poinsettia in the memo.

Orders are due 12/7.

Flowers can be picked up after the 8 PM Christmas Eve service or the following week when the church is opened. Please check off your name on the list in the back of the church so we know you've got yours!



YOUTH MINISTRIES

Contact: Anna Schoenenberger; AnnaS@ec-umc.com
December: festive yet reflective, both hectic and serene, quick moving while still a season of waiting. And, December is a most wonderful time of the year for celebrating our faith! This month is a balance of all these attributes; the current youth activities mirror this sentiment, too.

In November, our Youth Group had the opportunity to be a blessing and give the gift of time to families at our church by volunteering at the Drop 'n Shop event in November. They helped lead activities like Minute to Win It, crafts, and Mad Libs. Parents were able to have a couple hours to start holiday shopping, go out to eat, or just relax.

We also focused on being thankful, counted our plentiful blessings, and read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* While we learned to be grateful for our own blessings, we realized not all are so fortunate; outreach extended beyond our walls as the youth baked cookies that were taken to Rooted & Rising. The Stuff the Sleigh food drive for Rooted & Rising is underway, too, and the response has been quick and generous! The donations are being taken to R&R on a regular basis due to the high needs at their food center right now. The food drive runs through December 14. Thank you to all who have already donated.

Coming up next: **Ugly Sweater Christmas Movie**

Night on Friday, 12/12, from 6:00-8:30 PM. Wear your best Christmas sweater, enjoy a nacho bar, and watch a movie. There will also be a **short parent meeting** at 6:00 PM, so please plan on popping in and attending. Let Anna know you will be coming (AnnaS@ec-umc.com) so there will be enough food and supplies. Invite a friend!

The **Winter Youth Retreat** is January 23-25 at Camp Lake Lucerne. It's open to grades 6-12. The cost is \$50 because ECUMC will pay the rest. Come grow in your faith while having fun enjoying fellowship in the outdoors!



DECEMBER WORSHIP

Sunday, 12/7 —8:30 AM (S) and 10 AM (CH)

Friday, 12/5 Women's Service—6:30 PM (FH/S)

Sunday, 12/15—8:30 AM (CH) and 10 AM (CH)

Children's Program: Manger Tales

Sunday, 12/22 —8:30 AM (S) and 10 AM (S)

All-Choir Sunday

Wednesday, 12/24—Christmas Eve

2 PM and 8 PM - Sanctuary

4 PM - Celebration Hall

Sunday, 12/28 —9:00 AM (S)

There will be Sunday School for Children and Youth on 12/7, 12/14, and 12/21. Adult classes meet on 12/7 and 12/14 only.



COLLECTION FOR WOMEN'S SHELTER

Maggie Schlotthauer, a recent ECUMC Confirmand, is a member of the RWEA (Recognition of Women's Efforts and Achievements) Club at Menomonee Falls High School.

The club is doing a winter drive for The Women's Center in Waukesha and collecting these items:

- Shampoo or conditioner (any brand)
- Pads and Tampons
- Disinfectant wipes
- Children's water bottles
- Wired Ear-buds

Please consider supporting Maggie's efforts and our community by donating! Items are due 12/12.

If you have any questions, please contact Maggie at maggie.schlotthauer@gmail.com.

You can give items directly to Maggie or to her parents, Nate and Amy Schlotthauer, any Sunday.

Thank you and we really appreciate your generosity!



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWS

Contact: Liz Cannon (LizC@ec-umc.com)

Everyone was excited for the Children's Choir's first performance in their new choir robes in November. Under Laura Hohl's tutelage, the children sang, "Jesus Loves the Little Children." (I imagine it was the first time many of us heard kazoo humming in church!) Special thanks to Eunice Simmons for hemming the robes for our littlest singers.



Last month the children also spent a fun Sunday morning baking with Donna Baumgartner. She shared her time and talents with the Sunday School group. Everyone had the chance to make pretzels from scratch. Thanks Donna!

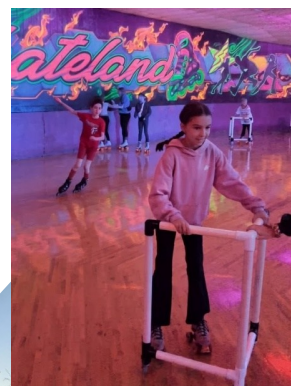


2025 Acolyte training is underway. This year we have four new children learning the ins and outs of lighting and

extinguishing the candles in sanctuary. We look forward to welcoming them into the worship service and celebrating their achievements on 12/17.



Club 4/5 has been busy this Fall. The Powers Family hosted the October event, and the group explored a corn maze together at Creekside Valley Pumpkin Farm. They also assembled 48 hygiene bags for clients at Rooted & Rising. The Schoenenberger Family organized a roller-skating outing in November, and the children decorated lunch bags for Meals on Wheels. This month the Matthias Family is hosting a Christmas movie get-together at church with a hot cocoa bar. The service project will be a special Christmas outreach for our Community Care members. Thank you to everyone for organizing,



hosting, and making these events happen for our Club 4/5 participants!

ECUMC's 2025 Christmas Program, "Manger Tales", will be featured during worship on Sunday, December 14, at 8:30 and 10:00 AM. Both services will be in Celebration Hall. The children have been rehearsing their lines and practicing their parts in anticipation of wowing everyone this Advent season.

We are all looking forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!



YAHAS

Join the YAHAS on Tuesday, 12/16.

After lunch, Kevin and Beth Schuhmacher will tell us about their recent trip to Vietnam.

Sign up on the YAHAS sheet by Pastor Matt's office.

Plan to bring a salad or dessert and meet in Celebration Hall at

11:15 AM for fellowship and lunch. Dues: \$3.

Bring a friend!



MUSIC NEWS – UPCOMING INVITATIONAL SUNDAY MORNINGS!

Contact: Bill Follmann, Billf@ec-umc.com, 414-881-3023

We have a couple of great invitational Sundays coming up in December. On Sunday, December 14 at both morning services, our children will tell us the story of Christmas through song and action.

During the afternoon of Sunday, December 14, from

1-3 PM, we will bring the joy of Christmas music to those who have trouble getting out during the season. We will carol at several local care centers.



Finally, on Sunday December 21, we will celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior through song at our annual All-Choir Sunday.

Please bring a friend, neighbor, or relative to any or all of these services as they are great invitational events.

Christmas Eve will bring a variety of music at the 2, 4, and 8 PM services. 4:12 will be singing at the 2 PM service and the Chancel Choir will be singing at the 8 PM service. We will have musical offerings at all Christmas eve services.

Please let me know if you have any questions.



SHINING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

As Advent candles flicker to life, we're reminded that even the smallest light can push back the darkness. The weeks leading up to Christmas invite us to wait with hope, to prepare our hearts and to remember that God's love comes to us not through power or wealth but through the humble gift of Jesus.

This season can feel busy and heavy, with travel plans, shopping lists and end-of-year pressures, but

Advent calls us to pause and notice the light already breaking into our lives. It shines in a child's laughter, a shared meal, a simple act of kindness. It shines through generosity that makes someone else's day a little brighter.

As you light your candles and prepare your homes and hearts, may you be reminded that Christ still comes into our world – quietly, gently, persistently – with hope for all people. And as God's light takes root in us, we are called to reflect it outward, helping others see that the darkness does not win.



The light shines in the darkness

and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5

Jason Manke – Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

THANK YOU, NEIL NEFF!

How do you properly thank someone for week-after-week devotion to performing tasks that the church needs done? The Trustees have been very fortunate to have had Neil Neff mow our cemetery and back acre of the church for the last 9 years.

He has kept our properties looking great!

If you see Neil walk by you, please shake his hand, and thank him for all of his hard work for so many years!

THANK YOU, NEIL!!!!



ROOTED & RISING RECEIVES AWARD

We are deeply honored to share that Rooted & Rising Washington Park has been selected as the 2025 recipient of the *James Argue Award* by the National Association of United Methodist Foundations!

This prestigious award, named in tribute to James Argue, who faithfully served 37 years leading the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, celebrates organizations making a meaningful impact through service and community.

This recognition celebrates our shared commitment to building stronger Milwaukee communities through housing, early education, and neighborhood engagement.



TIPS FOR CREATION CARE

*Gift giving started with God,
who gave God's only Son...*

*Wise persons today give their gifts
to honor that first Gift.*

Give light. Christmas lights are symbols of the Light that came into the world with the birth of Christ. Enjoy them and use LEDs to take care of the world that Jesus lit up with his presence. LED lights use 1/10 as much energy as conventional holiday lights, and they last years longer.

Give the story. When you shop online for gifts, check the "About" portion of the website before you buy. Find out what the company is or is not doing to care for creation and justice. Look companies that give back. Tell the story to the gift recipient too.

Give the past for the future. Ask parents and grandparents to give you an ornament that has been a part of your growing-up Christmas traditions. Pass along its story to your children. Or make your own tree ornaments representing something meaningful to you. Glue family photos to card stock and hang the picture on the tree. Create some new stories to tell each Christmas.

Give an awesome experience, perhaps a trip to a nature preserve or state or national park, a local museum, a concert. If you have young sports enthusiasts in your life, take them to a high school or local college basketball game. Give an adventure—an experience that can be shared, talked about, and remembered long after the usual "stuff" has been covered over in the landfill.

Give the gift of giving. Help a young person experience philanthropy directly. Give the funds and then together explore local non-profits that are likely to connect with your young person. Talk about why you give and encourage them to remember God's gift of love for people and planet.

Give gifts that last. Sustainability applies not only to the toys you give but also to the interest of the child. Toy companies like EarthHero and Green Toys provide cognitive, memory, mobility, and educational toys and games from materials like wood and recycled plastic—encouraging natural play in young ones that isn't just staring at a screen. These toys tend to survive in good enough

United Methodist
**Creation
Justice**
movement



shape to pass along to another generation.

Give without waste. Parties and holiday meals can be merry without plastic and food waste going into the landfill. Choose reusable tableware and decorations. Use silicone bags or glass containers to send home with guests any extra food, and compost scraps. Give a gift to Earth.

Give to help others. The innkeeper gave shelter to the Holy Family and likely some food too. Who in your community is struggling with meeting basic needs? Volunteer at a local shelter or donate to a food drive. Seek out opportunities that help people and planet. Both are in need.

Give an art project. Fill a box with items like broken or mismatched jewelry, construction paper, colorful leaves, smooth rocks, pinecones, feathers, paints and brushes, an empty frame, glue, scissors—whatever might spark creativity. Give the gift to a specific person or to the family as a fun Christmas Day project.



*Our Children and Youth enjoy the Drop 'n' Shop
in late November*

December 2025

30 8:30am - Worship (S) 8:30am - Sunday School (V) 8:45am - Adult Study (CL) 10am - Worship (CH) 1pm - Hmong Alliance (CH)	1 10am - Staff Meeting (FH) 6:30pm - Green Team (CL) 6:30pm - Mission Team (FH) 7pm - Singers 4:12 (MR)	2 5:45pm - Children's Min. (FH) 6:30pm - Spirit Ringers (MR) 6:30pm - Trustees (CL)	3 10am - Bible Study (FH) 5pm - Advent Study Rehearsal 6:30pm - Soup & Song (CH)	4 10am - Advent Study (FH) 6pm - Women's Choir (MR) 6:30pm - Men's Choir (MR) 7pm - Chancel Choir (MR)	5 Office Closed 10am - Bible Study (Z) 1pm - Bill Gay Celebration of 6:30pm - Women Worship (S)	6 12pm - Pierre Baby Shower 1pm - Club 4/5 (YR)
7 8:30am - Worship (S) 8:30am - Sunday School (V) 8:45am - Adult Study (CL) 10am - Worship (CH) 11am - Confirmation Class 1pm - Hmong Alliance (CH)	8 10am - Staff Meeting (FH) 5:30pm - Stewardship (CL) 7pm - Finance (CL) 7pm - Singers 4:12 (MR)	9 6:30pm - Spirit Ringers (MR)	10 10am - Bible Study (FH) 6:30pm - Soup & Song (CH) 7pm - Church Conference	11 10am - Advent Study (FH) 5pm - Advent Study (FH) 6pm - Men's Choir (MR) 6:30pm - Women's Choir (MR) 7pm - Chancel Choir (MR)	12 Office Closed 10am - Bible Study (Z) 6pm - Youth Movie Night (YR)	13 9am - All-Choir Rehearsal 9am - Christmas Program
14 8:30am - Worship (CH) 8:45am - Adult Study (CL) 10am - Worship (CH) 11am - Confirmation Class 1pm - Hmong Alliance (CH)	15 Pathways Deadline by Noon 9:30am - Sew and Sews (112) 10am - Staff Meeting (FH) 7pm - Singers 4:12 (MR)	16 11:30am - YAHAS (CH) 11:45am - Food Pantry 5pm - Food Pantry 6:30pm - SPRC (CL) 6:30pm - Spirit Ringers (MR)	17 10am - Bible Study (FH) 6pm - Scout Pack 60 (V) 6:30pm - Soup & Song (CH)	18 10am - Advent Study (FH) 5pm - Advent Study (FH) 6pm - Women's Choir (MR) 6:30pm - Men's Choir (MR) 7pm - Chancel Choir (MR)	19 Office Closed 10am - Bible Study (Z)	20 8am - Comm Breakfast (CH) 9pm - All-Choir Rehearsal
21 All-Choir Sunday 8:30am - Worship (S) 8:30am - Sunday School (V) 10am - Worship (S) 1pm - Hmong Alliance (CH)	22 10am - Staff Meeting (FH) 7pm - Singers 4:12 (MR)	23 10:30am - Spiritual Guidance	24 Christmas Eve - Office Closed 2pm - Worship (S) 4pm - Worship (CH) 8pm - Worship (S)	25 Christmas Day - Office Closed	26 Office Closed	27
28 9am - Worship (S) 1pm - Hmong Alliance (CH)	29	30	31 New Year's Eve - Office	1 New Year's Day - Office	2 Office Closed	3